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***NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY***

***JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE***

**JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**



**FRAMING THE CHINA DYNAMIC**

by

**Zachary King**

Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy



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by

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***Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy***

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

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## ABSTRACT

In January 2012, the United States Secretary of Defense released a strategy document entitled, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*. U.S. national challenges, interests, priorities, and goals were detailed and as a result, direction and guidance have been set forth to shift U.S. strategic priorities and resources to the Asia-Pacific region.

If the United States strategy for the Asia-Pacific region and China is not properly framed and does not evolve with regional and global challenges, the U.S. risks failure to successfully execute national guidance and risks conflict in the region. Strategy implementation is attainable and desired end states can be achieved only through a better understanding of the dynamics associated with a rising power, the Asia-Pacific region, its history, the complex relationships involved, existing perspectives and perceptions, current tensions and flashpoints, and an assessment of the strategic risks.

Strategic recommendations for the United States will focus on strengthening theoretical awareness of Chinese history and culture, maintaining a regional focus, management of flashpoints, continuous problem framing, thoughtful modernization, and an overall strategy of engagement with China that will enable the United States to successfully execute national guidance, achieve national goals, pursue national interests, and maintain national security.

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## INTRODUCTION

In January 2012, the United States Secretary of Defense released a strategy document entitled, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*.<sup>1</sup> U.S. national challenges, interests, priorities, and goals were detailed and as a result, direction and guidance have been set forth to strategically shift U.S. priorities and resources to the Asia-Pacific region. President Obama states: “Indeed, as we end today’s wars, we will be focused on a broader range of challenges and opportunities, including the security and prosperity of the Asia Pacific.”<sup>2</sup> This new strategy addresses the specific reasons for, and the necessity of, this shift to the Asia-Pacific region:

U.S. economic and security interests are inextricably linked to the developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, while the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region. Our relationships with Asian allies and key partners are critical to the future stability and growth of the region. We will emphasize our existing alliances, which provide a vital foundation for Asia-Pacific security. We will also expand our networks of cooperation with emerging partners throughout the Asia-Pacific to ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests.<sup>3</sup>

The strategy consistently highlights the importance of key partners, both established and emerging. Underlying this expansion of cooperation among partners and military rebalance toward the region is the resurgence of China and the critical role it will play in the decades to come. With regard to China, the document states:

The maintenance of peace, stability, the free flow of commerce, and of U.S. influence in this dynamic region will depend in part on the underlying balance of military capability and presence. Over the long term, China’s emergence as a

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership 2012: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*. (Washington DC: Department of Defense, January 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Preface.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3.

regional power will have the potential to affect the U.S. economy and our security in a variety of ways. Our two countries have a strong stake in peace and stability in East Asia and an interest in building a cooperative bilateral relationship. However, the growth of China's military power must be accompanied by greater clarity of its strategic intentions in order to avoid causing friction in the region. The United States will continue to make the necessary investments to ensure that we maintain regional access and the ability to operate freely in keeping with our treaty obligations and with international law. Working closely with our network of allies and partners, we will continue to promote rules-based international order that ensures underlying stability and encourages the peaceful rise of new powers, economic dynamism, and constructive defense cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

If the United States strategy for the Asia-Pacific region and China is not properly framed and does not evolve with regional and global challenges, the U.S. risks failure to successfully execute national guidance and risks conflict in the region. Strategy implementation is attainable and desired end states can be achieved only through a better understanding of the dynamics associated with a rising power, the Asia-Pacific region, its history, the complex relationships involved, existing perspectives and perceptions, current tensions and flashpoints, and an assessment of the strategic risks.

### **Current Challenges and Environment**

The United States is faced with a challenging global security environment. Still reeling from the economic crisis of 2008 and over a decade of war in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. finds itself at a "strategic turning point."<sup>5</sup> The 2010 *U.S. National Security Strategy* looks to be unexecutable and there exists an ends-ways-means mismatch due to insufficient resources to accomplish the goals set forth. Although the 2012 Department of Defense strategic guidance provides revised priorities, the resource constraints still exist. The 2012 Department of Defense *Defense Priorities and Choices* document states:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Preface, Secretary of Defense Panetta.

The Defense Department's current strategic guidance was driven by the approaching end of a decade of war, a changing technological and geopolitical landscape, and the national security imperative of deficit reduction. The Department's investment choices for FY 2013-2017 were derived from this guidance and conform to the 2011 Budget Control Act's requirement to reduce Defense Department future expenditures by approximately \$487 billion over the next decade or \$259 billion over the next five years. Reflecting these reductions, the Department will request funding of \$525 billion for FY 2013, rising to \$567 billion by FY 2017.<sup>6</sup>

The 2012 guidance calls for a smaller, leaner, and more agile force able to project globally, respond rapidly, and remain technologically advanced.<sup>7</sup> As stated in the *2010 National Security Strategy*, the U.S. national security interests remain. The threat of al-Qa'ida and the spread of violent extremist organizations continue. Access to weapons of mass destruction and nuclear materials remain. The long-term impact of the Arab Awakening remains unclear. Free access to the global commons remains critical, and the dynamics brought about by China's emergence as a global power have yet to be determined. Today's global security environment is steeped in challenges and requires clear strategy that is framed properly and thoughtfully.

### **Framing the China Dynamic**

Security and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region are the stated goals of U.S. national guidance. To achieve those goals, it is critical to have a sound understanding of the complex factors, dilemmas, and paradoxes at play throughout the region. Consider the following statement from the 2012 strategic guidance: "Our relationships with Asian allies and key partners are critical to the future stability and growth of the region. We will emphasize our

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Priorities and Choices*, (Washington DC: Department of Defense, January 2012), 2.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership 2012: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*. (Washington DC: Department of Defense, January 2012), Preface, Secretary of Defense Panetta.

existing alliances, which provide a vital foundation for Asia-Pacific security.”<sup>8</sup> This statement provides a clear strategic focus and may reassure allies and partners in the region, but also may be disconcerting to China. The balance between economic reliance and regional stability poses another dilemma: Asian countries require China’s economy to drive their own, but they also desire continued U.S presence in the region to ensure stability of the global commons. Thus it is critical to understand the dynamics of a complex and inter-dependent region when implementing long-term strategy.

To begin the process of framing the China dynamic the first chapter will address the question of rising powers and their intentions. Although China has stated that its rise is a peaceful one, calls for increased transparency and intentions continue. Through an analysis of international relations theory and a look at parallels found in World War I, the dynamics involved with a rising power in an established international system will be better understood.

The second chapter will examine existing relationships in the Asia-Pacific region. No simple answer can address the numerous factors at play; the complexity of the region cannot be binned or grouped simply. Current alliances and treaties, historical mistrust, territorial disputes, economic dependence, and the desire for resources are all at play and greatly impact the region. Careful examination and analysis of these relationships provide the necessary foundation to frame the China dynamic.

Chapter three identifies and analyzes three flashpoints in Asia-Pacific that hold the potential to destabilize the region and lead to conflict in the near-term. The tension between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan (The Republic of China) brings with it serious and realistic risk of conflict. The numerous maritime claims and territorial disputes found throughout

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership 2012: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*. (Washington DC: Department of Defense, January 2012), 8.

the region and the South China Sea speaks not only to sovereignty issues but the desire and need to garner vital resources to sustain one's country. Finally, the Korean Peninsula is a flashpoint that involves nuclear possibilities, an unpredictable North Korean regime, potential for mass migration, and the impact and importance for China of a buffer state. Understanding these flashpoints and the impact each have is absolutely critical in understanding the Asia-Pacific region.

The fourth chapter contains an analysis of the Chinese perspective – the most critical piece in framing the China dynamic. The writings of senior Chinese officials provide great insight into how China views the Asia-Pacific and the role of other countries within the region. The Warring States Period and Confucianism are examined to better understand Chinese history and culture. Current Chinese discussion on multipolarity, future wars, and perceived American decline will provide a broader understanding of the Chinese perspective.

The fifth chapter is a risk assessment of the Asia-Pacific region, a critical element of both problem solving and strategy development. The newly released strategy will be evaluated from a risk perspective. Risks related to concepts such as force structure cuts, regional preoccupation, overextension, dependence within the region and Chinese perceptions will be assessed.

The fifth and final chapter will address strategy recommendations and conclusions. The analysis and examination of historical parallels, relationships and flashpoints, Chinese perspectives, and risk potential will provide the necessary background to move forward with strategy recommendations supporting U.S. strategic guidance and its marked pivot to the Asia-Pacific region.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTENTIONS OF A RISING POWER**

Immense speculation has occurred regarding the resurgence of China, Chinese intentions, and the impact China's rise will have both on the regional and international established systems.

In China's 2010 National Defense White Paper, China's stated policies and goals are:

Looking into the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China will continue to take advantage of this important period of strategic opportunities for national development, apply the Scientific Outlook on Development in depth, persevere on the path of peaceful development, pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and national defense policy that is defensive in nature, map out both economic development and national defense in a unified manner and, in the process of building a society that is moderately affluent on a general basis, realize the unified goal of building a prosperous country and a strong military.<sup>1</sup>

Why then, in spite of this document and repeated claims of a peaceful rise, do members of the international community continue to request increased transparency and clarity of intentions?

History has shown time and again that rising and dissatisfied powers often challenge the international system and look to change their place in that system. Although the landscape of today looks quite different from that of the past, the international community now sees a global power in China, supported by three decades of economic growth, an increasingly developed military, and a member of the international system that did not participate in the creation of that system. The question remains: will China's rise be peaceful or will China, as a dissatisfied power, challenge today's status quo? The answer to that question is unknown and perhaps the leaders in Beijing themselves do not know.

### **Power Transition Theory**

A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler's power transition theory proposes that wars are a result of the interaction between rising, dissatisfied powers, the hegemon, and the international

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<sup>1</sup> People's Republic of China, *China's National Defense in 2010*. Information of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. March 31, 2011, 3.



system. Supported by historical events such as World War I, World War II, and the fall of the Soviet Union, this theory is creating concerns throughout the international community regarding China's rise. Organski and Kugler state:

Challengers [to the existing international system] are those powerful and dissatisfied great nations who have grown in power after the imposition of the existing international order. Their elites face circumstances where the main benefits of the international order have already been allocated. The conditions for conflict are present. Peace is threatened when challengers seek to establish a new place for themselves in the international order, a place to which they believe their increasing power entitles them.<sup>2</sup>

Conflict between the United States and China is not preordained and it is not the intent of this chapter or this thesis to argue in support of what would be a catastrophic and world changing event. Rather, the intent is to begin the process of framing the China dynamic by providing theory and themes present today with support of events from the past. David Shambaugh, author of *Containment or Engagement with China? Calculating Beijing's Responses*, states:

Organski and Kugler could hardly have described present-day China better. China today is a dissatisfied and non-status quo power which seeks to change the existing international order and norms of inter-state relations. Beijing is not satisfied with the status quo, sees that the international system and its "rules" were created by Western countries when China was weak, and believes that the existing distribution of power and resources is structurally biased in favor of the West and against China. It does not just seek a place at the rule-making table of international organizations and power brokers; it seeks to alter the rules and existing system. Beijing seeks to redress historical grievances and assume what it sees as its rightful place as a global power. Above all, China seeks to disperse global power and particularly to weaken the preponderant power of the United States in world affairs.<sup>3</sup>

David Lai, in his work, *The United States and China in Power Transition*, argues:

...the next 30 years will be a crucial stage for China's development and the evolution of the U.S. – China power transition. Unfortunately, these titanic changes are overshadowed by the inherently conflicting relations between China

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<sup>2</sup> Jacek Kugler and A.F.K. Organski, "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation," In *Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 174.

<sup>3</sup> David Shambaugh, *Containment or Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing's Responses*, *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn, 1996), 180-209.

and the United States. It will take these two great powers extraordinary efforts to come to terms with the emerging new realities.<sup>4</sup>

Although predictions of the impact of the U.S – China power transition continue, what lessons can history offer to better understand the current environment, better prepare for the future environment, and better prepare to avoid the mistakes of the past.

### **World War I Parallels**

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Great Britain was the world's superpower. Dominant both economically and militarily, Great Britain's power and influence led to an international system dictated by Great Britain. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Great Britain's power was in gradual decline and Germany's power was rapidly rising. It was this power transition that ultimately led to the First World War in 1914. Parallels can be drawn to the international environment in the years leading up to World War I and today. Henry Kissinger, in his work, *On China*, discusses this idea and states:

A number of commentators, including some in China, have revisited the example of the twentieth-century Anglo-German rivalry as an augury of what may await the United States and China in the twenty first century. There are surely strategic comparisons to be made. At the most superficial level, China is, as was imperial Germany, a resurgent continental power; the United States, like Britain, is primarily a naval power with deep political and economic ties to the continent. China, throughout its history, was more powerful than any of the plethora of its neighbors, but they, when combined, could – and did – threaten the security of the empire. As in the case of Germany's unification in the nineteenth century, the calculations of all of these countries are inevitably affected by the reemergence of China as a strong, united state. Such a system has historically evolved into a balance of power based on equilibrating threats.<sup>5</sup>

By 1871, Germany was the greatest military power in Europe. Germany's industrial, military, and population growth was significant, much more so than in France or Britain,

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<sup>4</sup> David Lai, *The United States and China in Power Transition*, Strategic Studies Institute Book, U.S. Army War College, December 2011, ix.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, Penguin Press, 2011), 515.

therefore Germany was the rising power and Britain the declining hegemon. Dramatic increases in military capabilities and a growing desire to become part of the international structure dominated German domestic and foreign policy. The development in the German naval capability was such that it forced Britain to not only expand upon its naval force, but begin the process of allying itself with neighboring countries in anticipation of and preparation for an aggressive and assertive Germany. Growing external angst regarding Germany's rise not only served as the catalyst for British actions, but that of the majority of the European community.

Conversely, German perceptions of actions taken by neighboring countries and throughout Europe brought about a sense of containment and therefore further added fuel to the fire of an inevitable war. Simply stated, neighboring countries perceived the economic and military strength of Germany as a clear sign that war was on the horizon and as such, developed militaries and alliances to protect their own security. The formation of these alliances brought about a sentiment within Germany that there was a concerted effort to contain Germany's growth.

A power transition is, and has been, very much underway in the Asia-Pacific region. As was Germany, China is a dissatisfied power – its many territorial disputes with other regional countries make this clear. Lai states:

Organski has provided two objective ways to deal with this concept. One, a dissatisfied power is not an ally of the dominant nation; and the other, it has no part in the creation of the existing international order. As such, this rising great power presumably does not share the fundamental values of the system and typically finds the existing international order working against its interests. When it becomes more powerful, a dissatisfied power will make an effort to change the international order.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> David Lai, *The United States and China in Power Transition*, (Strategic Studies Institute Book, U.S. Army War College, December 2011), 18.

The difference though is that China is not vying for a place in the current U.S. dominated international stage, as Germany did in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but is seeking to change that order. China's behavior resembles a traditional rising power in terms of greater investment in military capabilities and expansion of its sphere of influence well outside its periphery. In the midst of China's rise, significant increases to military capabilities have occurred throughout the Asia-Pacific. The Defense White Papers of Japan, Australia, and the Republic of Korea have all called for greater investment in military capabilities. Multiple Southeast Asian countries currently operate or are in the process of acquiring newer aircraft, submarines, and surface combatants. Combined joint military exercises continue at a steady pace.

China perceives U.S. alliances and presence throughout the region as a strategy of containment. The U.S. currently is aligned with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, and is in the process of building relationships in India, Vietnam, and Indonesia. In looking at a map of the Asia-Pacific Region, it is a reasonable expectation that China would feel as though it were being contained. Conversely, the economic power and vast military buildup ongoing in China is perceived by neighboring countries as an aggressive move



**Figure 1. Asia-Pacific Region**

towards dominance in the region. Kissinger's assesses the possibility as follows:

...China and the United States could easily fall into the kind of escalating tension...China would try to push American power as far away from its borders as it could, circumscribe the scope of American naval power, and reduce

America's weight in international diplomacy. The United States would try to organize China's many neighbors into a counterweight to Chinese dominance. Both sides would emphasize their ideological differences. The interaction would be even more complicated because the notions of deterrence and preemption are not symmetrical between these two sides. The United States is more focused on overwhelming military power, China on decisive psychological impact. Sooner or later, one side or the other would miscalculate.<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately Kissinger does not foresee this scenario, but similarities exist, and trends reoccur throughout history. Debate continues with regard to China's rise and whether or not it will be peaceful or will it resemble a rise of the past. Shambaugh states:

Will China be a satisfied mature power or an insecure nouveau riche power? Will it become a power at all? Will it flex its muscles or will they atrophy? Will China hold together or fall apart? Will its polity evolve liberally or revert to a dictatorial tyranny? Does Beijing seek regional hegemony or peaceful coexistence with its neighbors? Will the PRC play by the established rules of the international organizations and regimes, or does Beijing seek to undermine and change the rules and institutions? Do China's leaders understand the rules and accept their premises?<sup>8</sup>

An answer to this question will not be provided within this thesis; an answer to this question may not yet exist. Therefore a thorough understanding of the complexities found in the Asia-Pacific region is necessary to properly frame the China dynamic.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 521.

<sup>8</sup> David Shambaugh, "Containment or Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing's Responses," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn, 1996), 180-209.

## CHAPTER TWO: RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Relationships, alliances, and partnerships across the Asia-Pacific are rooted in a long and complex history. Understanding and framing these relationships within the context of China is critical as the U.S. shifts increased focus and resources to the region, especially during a period of considerable regional economic growth. As history has demonstrated, strong relationships, whether economic, diplomatic, or military-based, can significantly influence cooperation, basing, and security.

Over half the world's population is Asian. The region consists of three of the world's great powers in China, Japan, and India. India and China account for more than fifty percent of global economic growth. North Korea, Russia, India, and China are nuclear power states.<sup>1</sup> William Tow states, "The combination of spectacular regional economic growth, the cultural and religious diversity of its massive population base and the sheer material resources it will generate and consume over the course of this century justify the observation that there is now a broad consensus that the Asian continent is poised to become the new center of gravity in global politics."<sup>2</sup>

The 2012 Department of Defense strategic guidance states: "Our relationships with Asian allies and key partners are critical to the future stability and growth of the region. We will emphasize our existing alliances, which provide a vital foundation for Asia-Pacific security."<sup>3</sup> The U.S. currently holds bilateral alliances with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia,

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<sup>1</sup> William Tow, *Security Politics in the Asia-Pacific, A Regional-Global Nexus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*, Department of Defense (Washington DC, 2012), 2.

Thailand, and the Philippines and holds non-allied but close partnerships with Taiwan, Singapore, and Indonesia. Throughout the past two decades, China has increased its diplomatic efforts and has become allied through various means with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It has also strengthened its partnership with North Korea, increased influence throughout Africa and South America, and has become significant economic partners with Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and many others while working diligently to build ties throughout the South China Sea.

### **U.S. – China Dynamic**

Discussions of Asia-Pacific relationships will begin with the U.S. – China dynamic as seen over the past three decades. For the purpose of context: The United States and China have almost identical land areas with the exception being that the majority of U.S. land supports human habitation and the majority of Chinese land does not. With regard to population, the U.S. population is approximately 300 million versus the 1.3 billion in China. It is important to note the differences in length of history. The United States, started in 1789, has two hundred and twenty two years of history versus well over five thousand years of history in China. China, over the past three decades has experienced relative peace although throughout its history has experienced well over 6,000 wars. The U.S. although involved in multiple conflicts has only experienced two wars on U.S. soil. The Chinese saying *da jiang shan*<sup>4</sup> means that the nation was built by wars and one can conversely look at the U.S. and say it has been built through a constitution and through negotiation.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, it is important to point out the geographic location

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas, Spelman, *The United States and China: Mutual Public Perceptions*, The Wilson International Center for Scholar, 104-105.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 104.

of both countries. China shares borders with fourteen other countries and has border disputes with many of those countries; the U.S. shares borders with only two countries.

Throughout the past three decades, the U.S. and China have had stable bilateral relations, working through tensions in the early 90's. In 1979, the U.S. supported China against the rise and expansion of the Soviet Union. In 1989, President Reagan concluded the third Joint Communiqué on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, mitigating the ever-present flashpoint between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China.<sup>6</sup> However, throughout the early 1990's, the China – U.S. relationship became strained as the end of the Cold War and the change in administrations led to the sale of 150 F-16 fighter aircraft to Taiwan, the U.S. Congressional Resolution against Beijing's bid to host the 2000 Olympics, and the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis when the Clinton Administration deployed two aircraft carrier strike groups to the Straits. The latter half of the 2000's included state visits by both Presidents, and the inclusion of the People's Republic of China into the World Trade Organization (WTO). These improved relationships and growing interdependence enabled both countries to avoid a severing of all ties when the U.S. accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.<sup>7</sup> The Bush administration, after assuming office, supported China's trade desires, their role as host of the Olympics, and maintained the status quo Taiwan policy. As the relationship entered the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it remained stable with extensive common interests and in some areas, expanded cooperation.<sup>8</sup> However, the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> began with significant confrontation, heightened tensions, and the necessity to reframe the dynamic. In the first two months of 2010, President Obama notified Congress of his intent to sell weapons systems to Taiwan and met with the Dali Lama at the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 188-189.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 189-190.



White House.<sup>9</sup> These two events led to the suspension of high-level military exchanges between the U.S. and China. China refused to condemn the March 2010 sinking of the South Korean warship *Cheonan* and refused to endorse the investigation results.<sup>10</sup> The State Department's release of an annual human rights report in March 2010 criticized China's human rights record and in response China's State Council released a report criticizing U.S. gun policies, homelessness issues, and racial discrimination.<sup>11</sup> June and July of 2010 saw increased tensions over the execution of a U.S. led military exercise in the Yellow Sea in response to North Korean provocations and in response, China executed its own military exercise in the same body of water.<sup>12</sup> In August 2010, the U.S. aircraft carrier *George Washington* made its first visit to Vietnam and a U.S. destroyer conducted the first ever joint naval exercise with Vietnam. These actions were perceived as an attempt by the U.S. to counterbalance Chinese influence and as a result, China again conducted its own joint military exercises.<sup>13</sup> In October 2010, Secretary of State Clinton announced that the U.S. – Japan defense treaty covered the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, which remain disputed territory between China and Japan.<sup>14</sup> In November 2010, artillery fire was exchanged on the Korean Peninsula leading to another joint naval exercise led by the U.S. aircraft carrier *George Washington*. The year ended with President Obama contacting President Hu Jintao by phone, warning that the Chinese lack of response to North Korea's military acts was emboldening further North Korean provocations.<sup>15</sup> The events of

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<sup>9</sup> David Lai, *The United States and China in Power Transition*, (Strategic Studies Institute Book, U.S. Army War College, December 2011), 176.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 178.

2010 illuminate the need for a broader understanding of the relationships and dynamics found in the Asia-Pacific region.

### **U.S. – Japan – China Dynamics**

Incredible shifts in the balances of power in the Asia-Pacific region have occurred in the decades following the end of the Second World War. A once decimated Japan now is a leading economic power with a vast sphere of influence both regionally and internationally. The dilemma for Japan lies in its proximity to a resurgent China, the growth of other regional powers such as India and Russia, historical animosity from China, and the reliance on the United States for security.



**Figure 2. Japan - China**

Japan’s 2011 Defense White Paper identifies increased risk to “the stable access to Global Commons such as the seas, space, and cyberspace,”<sup>16</sup> the “proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, as well as that of ballistic missile that serve as delivery means,”<sup>17</sup> international terrorist elements, and “regional conflicts with diverse and complex backgrounds.”<sup>18</sup> Regionally, Japan identifies instability on the Korean Peninsula, military modernization linked to increased economic growth throughout, lack of transparency with regard to China’s increased military capabilities, an emerging Russian

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<sup>16</sup> Government of Japan, Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2011*. Tokyo: GOJ: 2011, 24.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

presence, the necessity of continued engagement in multilateral opportunities, and the critical importance of continued U.S. presence as the dominant security factors.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to the Japanese – U.S. Alliance, the 2011 Japanese Defense White Paper states the importance of the relationship and security arrangements in place:

Based on the Japan – U.S. Security Treaty, the Japan – U.S. Security Arrangements constitute one of the pillars of Japan’s national defense. And the Japan – U.S. Alliance, having the Japan – U.S. Security Arrangements as its core, is indispensable to maintain not only the peace and security of Japan, but also that of the entire Asia-Pacific region. In addition, the close cooperative relationship between Japan and the United States based on the alliance is proving to be extremely significant for effectively dealing with numerous and complex global security issues. Furthermore, the Japan – U.S. Alliance is playing an increasingly important role in promoting the shared fundamental values in the international community such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and a capitalist economy. Under the new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), Japan will further deepen and develop the Japan – U.S. Alliance to adapt to the evolving security environment.<sup>20</sup>

It is also critical to note the binding legal agreement that remains in place between the U.S. and Japan. Article 5 of the U.S – Japan Security Treaty designates that the United States and Japan will take bilateral action in the event of an armed attack against Japan. “The U.S. obligation to defend Japan in the event of an armed attack means that an attacker must be prepared to confront not only the military power of the Japanese SDF (self defense force), but also the overwhelming military strength of the United States when planning such an attack.”<sup>21</sup> The Japanese intent is to make it clear to the actors, both internal and external to the Asia-Pacific region, that an attack on Japan is an attack on the United States.

Japan’s assessment of China acknowledges impressive economic growth and the larger role China now plays internationally: “In both name and reality, China is growing into a big

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 263.

power and has started playing a major role in the world and region.”<sup>22</sup> The greatest concern for Japan is the lack of Chinese policy and military transparency:

China is steadily growing as a major political and economic power, and its military power also attracts attention from other countries. In order to allay concerns over China, it is becoming more and more important for China itself to improve transparency of its national defense policy and military capability. It is hoped that China will increase transparency concerning its military affairs by disclosing specific information pertaining to its defense policies and military capabilities.”

The Japanese – U.S. relationship has never been more important. The alliance, and specifically the bases within Japan, enables the United States to respond rapidly not only to changes in regional security such as the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan, but also enables the U.S. military to rapidly deploy forces in support of humanitarian and disaster relief missions. The U.S. presence in Japan provides a deterrent force to potential adversaries of Japan as well as other state and non-state actors in the region. If the alliance were to falter, it would be challenging for the U.S. to effect change within the region. With the loss of forward bases in Japan, the region would become significantly less stable and states throughout the region would no longer have the buffer of a strong U.S. presence in the commons. A break in the alliance would also diminish the blanket of deterrence provided by the U.S. In turn, this may embolden the People’s Republic of China to more aggressively pursue the current territorial claims and maritime disputes. A paper published by the Center for a New American Security states:

Today’s U.S.-Japan alliance has a positive and inclusive rationale: Sustaining a liberal international order in which the global commons remains open, democratic governance retains the highest form of legitimacy and rules long agreed upon in international institutions govern a growing subset of state behavior.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>23</sup> Patrick M. Cronin, Daniel M. Kliman and Abraham M. Denmark, *Renewal: Revitalizing the U.S.-Japan Alliance*, Washington D.C.: Center for a New American Century, October 2010, 9.

Long memories exist in the Asia-Pacific region, and China holds disdain for Japanese actions and atrocities of the past. However, it was not too long ago that China supported increased military development in Japan. Michael Pillsbury writes:

The Chinese have not always been so negative in their views of Japan's military developments and actually encouraged it in the 1970's. Indeed, it was not until the mid-1980's that China reassessed its support (offered since 1972) for Japanese military modernization. Chinese military figures had encouraged Japan to increase its defense spending to meet the Soviet threat. At one point the Chinese deputy chief of the general staff encouraged Japan to increase its share of defense expenditures from 1 percent of the gross national product (GNP) up to 3 percent, nearly triple Japanese defense expenditures. If this advice had been followed by Tokyo, Japan's budget today would not be U.S. \$40 billion but U.S. \$150 billion, more than 20 times China's claimed military budget.<sup>24</sup>

At that time China was faced with a growing Soviet threat and looked to gain a defense partner in the region. A decade later, as the Cold War ended and Japan did in fact increase defense expenditures, China no longer viewed Japan as a potential security partner, but as a country holding larger military ambitions. The combination of increased Japanese defense spending, increased ties between Japan and Taiwan, and the strengthening of ties between the U.S. and Japan that have caused serious concerns within China regarding Japanese intentions. With regard to Taiwan, Pillsbury states, "At present, China is most concerned about a possible Japanese manipulative role in Taiwan politics, possibly encouraging Taiwan to move towards independence and a close relationship with Japan."<sup>25</sup> With regard to the U.S. – Japan security agreements and relationship, a senior fellow at the Chinese Institute for International Strategic Studies (CIISS) states:

Adjustment in Japan-U.S. military relations will enable Japan to have the opportunity to achieve a new breakthrough in military policies and further encourage the turn to the right in domestic politics in Japan...For quite some time,

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), 113.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 132.

there has been growth of the rightist tendency in seeking reversal of the verdict on the history of Japan's aggression and trying to rid itself of the status of the vanquished nation. Although this is a stubborn manifestation of the rightist forces in Japan, it should also be noted at the same time it is closely related to Japan's strengthening of its military relations with the United States, which indicates that there are indeed some people in Japan attempting to seek a military upswing by strengthening its military relations with the United States.<sup>26</sup>

To further understand the Chinese – Japanese dynamic it is important to look to a significant historical source of controversy and tension between the two countries. The Yasakuni Shrine, located in Tokyo, is a non-state sponsored shrine dedicated to Japanese who have died in the name of their country. Within the Shrine, fourteen convicted World War II class-A war criminals are honored.<sup>27</sup> China interprets visits to the shrine by Japanese Prime Ministers and senior officials as gross signs of disrespect for historical events and atrocities. These visits are perceived as imperialistic in tone and tendency. Yasakuni is also a domestic political issue in Japan, serving as a rallying symbol for patriots and nationalists.<sup>28</sup>

The U.S. – Japan – China dynamic remains both critical and fragile. For the United States, the relationship is vital and must continue to remain strong if the U.S. intends to pivot to the Asia-Pacific region. For China, the perception of a stronger U.S. – Japanese alliance, the increased “militarism” of Japan, Japanese involvement in Taiwan, and historical enmity together pose a challenge to China's rise.

### **U.S. – Republic of Korea – Democratic People's Republic of Korea – China Dynamics**

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>27</sup> I was first made aware of the controversial Yasakuni Shrine in Dr. Winterford's JFSC PACOM Elective and have incorporated the information discussed during the lecture for this segment.

<sup>28</sup> Japan's Controversial Shrine, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1330223.stm> August, 2006 (accessed January 29, 2012).

The complexity of the relationships between the United States, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and the People's Republic of China (PRC) creates an ever-present potential for instability and conflict. The Republic of Korea's dilemma centers on the unpredictability and daily threat of conflict to the North, an increasing economic reliance on China, and the strong security relationship it enjoys with the United States. China's issues center on the buffer state role North Korea plays, the continued



**Figure 3. Korean Peninsula - China**

encroachment of U.S. presence on the Peninsula, the potential contingencies that exist if the DPRK regime were to fall, and the economic ties it has both with the DPRK and ROK. For the United States and beyond, the Korean Peninsula is a flashpoint and a top security priority in the region.

Internationally, the Republic of Korea assesses the global security environment in the 2010 Defense White Paper as follows:

In addition to the traditional military threats, the nature of today's changing security threats can be summed up as being complicated and multifarious due to the increase of transnational and non-military threats. Borderless threats that encompass the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), terrorism, piracy at sea and cyber attacks have been continually increasing, while non-military threats, including communicable diseases, natural disasters, global warming, and environmental pollution have also emerged as major security issues.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Republic of Korea, Ministry of Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*.

Regionally, the Republic of Korea's dominant security issue is North Korea but also identifies cross-strait relations between China and Taiwan and ongoing sovereignty disputes throughout the region as other significant factors that destabilize the region.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the Republic of Korea has identified regional military trends found throughout the region: "Northeast Asia is the seat of global military power on which the combined military budgets in the region represent more than half of the global military budget. China and Japan are vying with each other to build up their navies and air forces, while the U.S. stays on top in military strength."<sup>31</sup> The ROK National Security Strategy objectives of maintaining stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula, establishing the foundation for public safety and national prosperity, and enhancing the country's international capacity and stature carry with them three tenets of national security: "creating a new peace structure, carrying our pragmatic diplomacy and openness, and seeking advanced security that reached out to the world."<sup>32</sup> However, the underlying and overarching issue for the Republic of Korea is the situation in the North and the instability brought about by that dynamic.

On March 26, 2010, a DPRK torpedo sank the Republic of Korea ship, *Cheonan*. On November 23 of the same year, Yeongpyeong Island was shelled by DPRK artillery. The United States condemned the actions of the DPRK and quickly executed a large-scale multilateral military exercise. This reaction exhibited a strong commitment to the Republic of Korea and regional allies and partners, as well as reaffirmed U.S. presence in the region and the strength of its military capabilities. As a growing regional power looking to build and strengthen regional relationships and international credibility, China and its response to these events was perceived

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



to be severely lacking. Benjamin Shreer, author of an article entitled, *The Korean Crises and the Sino-American Rivalry*, states:

China's crisis behaviour has opened distance between it and South Korea, which for two decades has been regarded as a significant prize in emerging strategic competition between China and America. Beijing's month-long delay in offering condolences to Seoul over the *Cheonan* sinking and its unwillingness to criticize Pyongyang's provocations in both instances has generated deep public resentment in South Korea.<sup>33</sup>

The events of 2010 speak to China's dilemma in balancing historical ties to North Korea and the responsibilities of an emerging global power. Countries in the region with strong economic ties with China, such as Australia, spoke out against Chinese inaction. These reactions alone set back China's diplomatic efforts throughout the region and provided the impetus for the region to look more toward the United States for strengthened security measures.

The Korean Peninsula is fraught with instability and potential for conflict. No clear prediction can be made as to what may occur in the future. For the United States, a continued ally must remain. For China, balance must be found between support for a historical ally and the necessity to act responsibly as an emerging global power.

#### **U.S. – Australia – China Dynamics**

Australia maintains friendships with both the United States and the People's Republic of China. The U.S. has enjoyed a strong alliance for



**Figure 4. Australia - China**

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<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Schreer and Brendan Taylor, "The Korean Crises and Sino-American Rivalry", *Survival* 53, no. 1 (Feb/Mar 2011), 13-19.

more than sixty years and the Chinese-Australian economic relationship is flourishing. Although no significant animosities exist between China and Australia, Australia could very well be *the* critical relationship for the U.S. in the years to come. As the U.S. looks to grow and strengthen relationships in the region, Australia remains a very capable force and friend that must continue to assume responsibility for regional security. The Australian Prime Minister, in a joint press statement with President Obama, stated in November 2011:

...I'm very pleased to be able to announce with President Obama that we've agreed joint initiatives to enhance our alliance -- 60 years old and being kept robust for tomorrow. It is a new agreement to expand the existing collaboration between the Australian Defence Force and the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force. What this means in very practical detail is from mid-2012, Australia will welcome deployments of a company-size rotation of 200 to 250 Marines in the Northern Territory for around six months at a time. Over a number of years, we intend to build on this relationship in a staged way to a full force of around 2,500 personnel -- that is a Marine Air Ground Task Force. A second component of these initiatives which we have agreed is greater access by U.S. military aircraft to the Royal Australian Air Force facilities in our country's north. This will involve more frequent movements of U.S. military aircraft into and out of northern Australia. Now, taken together, these two initiatives make our alliance stronger, they strengthen our cooperation in our region.<sup>34</sup>

This joint initiative sent a clear message throughout the region that both the United States and Australia are committed to further strengthening their relationship and regional security. However, as has been stated, as certain relationships in the region respond to and evolve with new circumstances, other dilemmas and tensions may arise. For Australia, balancing both security and economic interests will be challenging. Similar to other regional actors, attempts are being made to not choose one side over the other. Simply stated by the Lowy Institute, an

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<sup>34</sup> Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Gillard of Australia in Joint Press Conference, November 16, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/16/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-gillard-australia-joint-press>.

Australian policy think tank, “Getting China wrong will have serious detrimental consequences for our security and growth.”<sup>35</sup>

Although recent developments such as the announcement of U.S. Marine deployments to Darwin and the Defense Strategic Guidance have reinforced U.S. commitment to the region, the 2009 Australian Defense White Paper, raises concern over U.S. long term commitment and staying power:

Will the United States continue to play over the very long term the strategic role that it has undertaken since the end of World War II? It remains the case that no other power will have the military, economic or strategic capacity to challenge US global primacy over the period covered by this White Paper. But the United States might find itself preoccupied and stretched in some parts of the world such that its ability to shift attention and project power into other regions, when it needs to, is constrained.<sup>36</sup>

Australian focus remains on strengthening alliances and partnerships, defense of the homeland, and presence in Australia’s “immediate neighborhood.” Australia sees the potential for the larger military powers of the Asia-Pacific region to enter into conflict and Australia’s assessment is that the U.S. will be forced to lean more heavily on allies and partners than in the past.

Developments in our wider region are critical to our security. There are likely to be tensions between the major powers of the region, where the interests of the United States, China, Japan, India and Russia intersect. As other powers rise, and the primacy of the United States is increasingly tested, power relations will inevitably change. When this happens there will be the possibility of miscalculation. There is a small but still concerning possibility of growing confrontation between some of these powers.<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, Australia assesses the critical nature of the relationship between the U.S. and China and from this relationship the nature of stability in the region will be dictated.

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<sup>35</sup> Allen Dupont, Michael Hintze, *Living with the Dragon: Why Australia needs a China Strategy*, (Australia: Lowy Institute for International Policy June 2011), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Government of Australia, Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century*, Canberra: May 2009, 32.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

The crucial relationship in the region, but also globally, will be that between the United States and China. The management of the relationship between Washington and Beijing will be of paramount importance for strategic stability in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>38</sup>

For Australia, a stable Asia-Pacific region provides for their continued security and economic growth. Australia identifies a concern in China's strategic transparency and details the need for increased and open communication:

China has begun to do this in recent years, but needs to do more. If it does not, there is likely to be a question in the minds of regional states about the long-term strategic purpose of its force development plans, particularly as the modernization appears potentially to be beyond the scope of what would be required for a conflict over Taiwan.<sup>39</sup>

Australia must carefully balance the following needs: protection of its own economic strength and growth, maintenance of its security alliance with the U.S., investment in its own self-defense capabilities, and preparations to face an increasingly strong People's Liberation Army (PLA). The Lowy Institute policy brief states:

On the one hand we extol the benefits of an enhanced bilateral relationship while on the other we embark on one of the largest military build-ups in Australia's peacetime history, aimed squarely at a putative China threat. Small wonder some Chinese commentators are jaundiced about our protestations of friendship and believe our actions betray our rhetoric.<sup>40</sup>

Some Australian observers are of the opinion that China will surpass the U.S. in the next two decades, both economically and militarily.<sup>41</sup> However, they also make it clear that the burden for maintaining security will continue to lie with the U.S.:

A crucial element of this approach is the continued engagement and presence in the Asia-Pacific region of the United States. The Government's judgment is that

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>40</sup> Allen Dupont, Michael Hintze, *Living with the Dragon: Why Australia needs a China Strategy*, (Australia: Lowy Institute for International Policy June 2011), 3.

<sup>41</sup> Government of Australia, Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century*, Canberra: May 2009, 34.

strategic stability in the region is best underpinned by the continued presence of the United States through its network of alliances and security partnerships, including with Japan, the Republic of Korea, India and Australia, and by significant levels of US military capability continuing to be located in the Western Pacific.<sup>42</sup>

Australia has been and will continue to be a stalwart ally for the U.S. Australia has fought side-by-side with the U.S. in every conflict since WWII. The U.S. sees Australia as a critical ally in the region, and one that must provide more to collective security and stability burden sharing. A re-energized alliance with Australia and the U.S. will be critical in the years to come as the tensions in the South China Sea increase and as Indonesia continues to grow as a young democratic state. It will take delicate diplomacy and thoughtful actions to ensure the balance is maintained between the security agreement with the U.S. and the economic impact of China. The Lowy Institute states, "History tells us that a rising great power like China inevitably challenges the existing international order and by definition the place and power of the previously dominant state."<sup>43</sup> If Australia's assessment is accurate, the relationships, partnerships, and alliances across the Asia-Pacific will be all the more crucial in years to come.

### **U.S. – India – China Dynamics**

India has an estimated population of 1.17 billion in an area approximately one-third the size



**Figure 5. India - China**

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>43</sup> Allen Dupont, Michael Hintze, *Living with the Dragon: Why Australia needs a China Strategy*, (Australia: Lowy Institute for International Policy June 2011), 3.

of the United States. India has the third largest economy in the region and is a major nuclear power; for these reasons it continues to play a significant role in the regional Asia-Pacific dynamic. The dominant theme in India's foreign relations is the long-standing, tense rivalry with Pakistan over Kashmir, leading to conflict in 1947, 1965, and 1971. However, India's relationships with the U.S. and China also remain critical to their foreign relations.

India's Ministry of Defense 2010-2011 Annual Report identifies dynamics such as rising powers, the fallout from the 2008 economic crisis, terrorism, piracy, and the proliferations of weapons of mass destruction as dominant themes. The report states: "Even though the probability of conventional full scale inter-state wars is reckoned by many analysts to have reduced, the security environment has become complex, with incidence of low intensity conflicts and asymmetric threats taking various forms, including domestic and trans-national terrorism, narco-terrorism, cyber warfare and piracy."<sup>44</sup> Additionally, India's assessment of the regional environment can be best captured in the following:

The security situation in India's neighbourhood continued to be cause for concern during the year, owing to continued insurgency in Afghanistan, spread of terrorism and radicalism in the region and the inadequacy of responses in some countries. On the positive side, the democratic process in the region is being consolidated in most countries and hurdles in the way of regional cooperation are being addressed. There are signs of economic recovery in the region. A secure, stable peaceful and prosperous neighbourhood is central to India's security construct. India continues to pursue active and collaborative engagements with her neighbours with a view to promoting mutual understanding, regional peace and stability.<sup>45</sup>

With regard to the India – China relationship, lingering effects of the 1962 border war remain, but gradual progress has been made and relations between the two countries have been

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<sup>44</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *2010-2011 Annual Report*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

relatively stable. David Malone, a former Canadian U.N Ambassador and High Commissioner to India, summarizes the relationship:

It is surprising that the two states with such a rich and sometimes fractious history, including a border conflict in 1962, should have what appears to be a largely reactive relationship. But neither has developed a grand strategy with regard to the other. An unshakeable and largely unprofitable preoccupation with domestic consolidation on the Chinese side, have left the relationship under-tended. It might be best seen as one of geostrategic competition qualified by growing commercial competition. And there is some asymmetry: China is a more fraught subject in Indian national debates than India is for China. China does not appear to feel threatened in any serious ways by India, while India at times displays tremendous insecurity in the face of Chinese economic success and military expansion.<sup>46</sup>

China's concern lies in India's relationship with the U.S. and other regional actors; India's concern lies in U.S. intentions and responses to China's rise. Although 2006 was declared "India-China Friendship Year" celebrated by state visits, exchanges, the opening of trade routes, and cultural events, security concerns remain and the potential for conflict does in fact exist. China's relationship with and support of Pakistan's nuclear and missile technology causes concern for India. Conversely, ongoing issues with Tibet and its situation as a buffer state to India are concerns for China. Ultimately, though, the largest challenge to the India – China relationship will be the rapidly improving U.S. – India relationship as perceived by China, and the recent U.S. focus on engagement with China as perceived by India.

As strategic partners and as the world's two largest democracies, India and the U.S. share important common interests. Strategic dialogue has spurred collaboration on multiple issues such as trade, climate change, education, and counter-terrorism. Commerce through the Indian Ocean is critical to both economies and the U.S. conducts more military exercises with India than with any other country. Balancing efforts to improve ties with India while engaging China

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<sup>46</sup> David M. Malone and Mukherjee, Rohan, "India and China: Conflict and Cooperation", *Survival* 52, no. 1, (February-March 2010), 137.

will be critical in the years to come. The U.S. can expect India's policy of measured engagement with all major powers to continue and therefore will need to dedicate sufficient time reassuring its commitment to India.

### **U.S. – Philippines – China – Dynamics**

The Philippines, although one of the smaller countries in the region in terms of territory and population, comprises over 7,100 islands and has the third largest coastline in the world.<sup>47</sup> As will be discussed later in this chapter, The Philippines has ongoing territorial disputes throughout the South China Sea, which recently led to heightened tensions with China in 2011.



**Figure 6. Philippines - China**

Reports of confrontations between Philippine and Chinese vessels surfaced in February and March, and in April, the Philippines filed a diplomatic note to the U.N. over the sovereignty of the Spratly Islands. In June 2011, the Philippines Prime Minister stated:

The Philippines has made clear its position on the issue: to maintain peace while allowing for the economic development of the area. There is no need to segregate the non-disputed areas. What is ours is ours, and what is disputed can be shared [...] there should be a rules-based regime that should be put in force so that international law will have to prevail [...] we are hoping that the issue can be resolved diplomatically and in accordance with international law.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> House of Commons Library, *Military Balance in Southeast Asia*, Research Paper 11/79, (London: December 14, 2011), 38.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



In September 2011, The Philippines entered into a Strategic Partnership with Japan to strengthen their relationship and press for continued freedom of navigation, compliance with international law, and peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea. Although 2011 was significant in terms of Philippine sovereignty and maritime claims, it is the counter-insurgency operations occurring in the South that truly dominate the strategic thinking.<sup>49</sup>

The United States has shared a mutual defense treaty and a strong alliance with the Philippines since World War II. The treaty, signed in 1951, commits both nations to support each other in the event of attack or in reaction to attack.<sup>50</sup> Although questions surfaced in the Philippines regarding the applicability of the treaty following the Chinese – Philippine maritime tensions of 2011, the alliance remains strong and the mutual defense treaty was reaffirmed in August 2011 with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The U.S. is a key ally for the Philippines in terms of security, training, military education, and capacity building. To acknowledge the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a U.S. State Department press release stated:

Our alliance with the Philippines continues to grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as our two countries chart a new vision for our critical partnership, in the defense realm and beyond. Whether we are working together to combat extremism, help victims of natural disasters, or stand up for human rights, the people of our countries share a mutual desire to build a better world for future generations.<sup>51</sup>

With regard to China, although a stable economic relationship exists with the Philippines, the maritime and territorial disputes and specifically the events of 2011 do not lend themselves to an improved overall relationship. Additionally, the long standing U.S. relationship with the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of State, *60th Anniversary of the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty*

Victoria Nuland, Washington DC, 30 August 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/08/171282.htm> (accessed December 18, 2011).

Philippines shows no signs of decay. For China, the Philippines is an example of continued U.S. encroachment and influence in the region.

### **U.S. – Vietnam – China – Dynamics**

Similar to the Philippines, Vietnam's strategic priorities revolve around territorial integrity and disputed territory in the South China Sea. Vietnam has ongoing border disputes with Cambodia and Laos and off shore islands disputes with Cambodia. Additionally, in 1988, armed conflict occurred between Vietnam and China over the Spratly Islands and seventy Vietnamese sailors died. In 2008, tensions increased between the two



**Figure 7. Vietnam - China**

countries over foreign resource exploration contracts. As recently as the spring of 2011, Vietnam accused Chinese ships of trying to damage a survey vessel in what Vietnam claimed as territorial waters.<sup>52</sup> As a result of these tensions, Vietnam and China signed an agreement pledging to resolve maritime disputes peacefully, meet twice a year to discuss the future security environment, and to seek possible joint development in the South China Sea, yet significant strain remains in China – Vietnam relations.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam Ministry of National Defence published a national defense white paper in 2009 outlining Vietnam's assessment of the global and regional security environment:

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<sup>52</sup> House of Commons Library, *Military Balance in Southeast Asia*, Research Paper 11/79, (London: December 14, 2011), 46.

The security situation of the world and the region in the early 21st century has seen complicated changes. However, peace and cooperation for mutual development has been the mainstream. Although a world war or a war in which weapons of mass destruction (WMD) might be used is unlikely, local wars and armed conflicts among countries or within a nation originating from national, ethnic and religious contradictions, terrorism, interference, subversion, separatism, disputes over territory, natural resources, and national interests have been on the rise, deeply affecting peace and security of all nations.<sup>53</sup>

These maritime and sovereignty disputes, as well as China's declaration of the South China Sea as a 'core interest', have encouraged Vietnam to seek partnership with other nations such as India and the United States. This is an opportunity for the U.S. to develop a potentially vital relationship in the region. Additionally, Vietnam has also committed to a military modernization program aimed at building the necessary security capacity to defend its claims. Through an increasingly positive relationship with India, a memorandum of understanding was signed in 2007 focused on improved military-to-military relations, training and exercises, and sales of military parts and components to repair and improve current capabilities.<sup>54</sup> In October 2008, the United States agreed to hold annual political and military talks with Vietnam and in 2010, held their first joint military exercise. As recent as January of 2012, the *Korea Herald* reported an official visit by the Vietnamese Defence Minister Phung Quang Thanh to Japan to inspect Japan's Maritime Self Defense Force submarines.<sup>55</sup> The first of six Kilo-class submarines will soon be delivered to Vietnam and this fact in addition to agreements made with Japan to assist in the training and operation of these submarines, provides a clear signal of Vietnam's view of the security environment and its desired future role.<sup>56</sup> For the U.S., "increased dialogue and

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<sup>53</sup> Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Ministry of Defence, *2009 Vietnam National Defence*, 13.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>55</sup> "China, Russia, U.S. face off beneath the waves," *Korea Herald* January 27, 2012, <http://www.koreaherald.com/national/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20120127000919> (accessed February 10, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

cooperation with Vietnam allows Washington to consolidate and expand its influence in Southeast Asia while at the same time providing access to a country with a rapidly expanding economy and a government that has extensive military modernization priorities.”<sup>57</sup> These recent developments alert China that it is not only the historical allies and partners of the U.S. that will influence the regional dynamics moving forward. Additionally, the trend of greater U.S. influence and partnerships may continue if China does not change its course of action in the South China Sea.

### **U.S. – Indonesia – China – Dynamics**

Indonesia’s territory includes 18,000 islands, 2,600 miles, and has the second largest coastline in the world. Appropriately, Indonesia’s security concerns are related to maritime commons and maritime security. As with the majority of nations in the South China Sea, Indonesia has its share of territorial and maritime disputes.<sup>58</sup>

Bilateral disputes between Indonesia and Malaysia,



**Figure 8. Indonesia - China**

East Timor, and China are long-standing, but do not pose a serious security threat to the region and tensions do not fluctuate as in some other situations. Indonesia is a founding member of ASEAN and internationally some see Indonesia as the cornerstone of the alliance.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> House of Commons Library, *Military Balance in Southeast Asia*, Research Paper 11/79, (London: December 14, 2011), 48.

<sup>58</sup> House of Commons Library, *Military Balance in Southeast Asia*, Research Paper 11/79, (London: December 14, 2011), 28.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

Once viewed as a “problem state”<sup>60</sup> by the U.S., U.S relations with Indonesia have undergone significant improvements over the past decade and recently a Comprehensive Partnership was signed. Following years of political instability, sectarian and separatist violence, and terrorist bombings such as the 2002 bombings in Bali, Indonesia has worked through challenges, implemented a democratic government and now has entered a period of stability and economic growth. U.S. interests in Indonesia are strategic due to geography, sea lines of communication, and the presence of violent extremist organizations (VEO). Indonesia continues to grow its capabilities to stem the spread of VEO’s and is a model to the world that Islam and democracy can coexist. The U.S. and Indonesia are working together to combat the VEO threat, provide disaster relief assistance, assist with peacekeeping operations, and manage China’s rise. Additionally, with the strategic geographic importance of Indonesia in the South China Sea, this relationship is a critical one for the U.S. and all indications point to further growth.<sup>61</sup>

In the past several years China has also worked to improve its relations with Indonesia. An agreement signed between China and Indonesia in 2009 provided for Chinese assistance to Indonesia’s defense capability.<sup>62</sup> A subsequent memo of understanding was signed in 2011 addressing missile technology improvements and resulted in the first Chinese and Indonesia Special Forces joint exercise in June of 2011.<sup>63</sup> However, as Indonesia continues to grow economically and militarily, defense cooperation agreements have also been signed with Russia

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<sup>60</sup> Ann Marie Murphy, “US Rapprochement with Indonesia: From Problem State to Partner”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32, no. 3 (2010), 362-87.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> House of Commons Library, *Military Balance in Southeast Asia*, Research Paper 11/79, (London: December 14, 2011), 30.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

and Serbia in September of 2011, Turkey and Saudi Arabia in April 2011, France in July 2011, South Korea, India, Vietnam, and Brunei.<sup>64</sup>

### **U.S. – Thailand – China – Dynamics**

Thailand and the U.S. became treaty allies in 1954 with the signing of the Manila Pact. This pact created the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), and although disbanded in 1970, the defense agreements between Thailand and the U.S. remain, and Thailand continues to be one of the closest U.S. allies in the region. Through extensive joint military exercises and professional military education exchanges, the U.S. – Thailand



**Figure 9. Thailand - China**

relationship remains strong. In 2003, Thailand was designated as a major non-NATO ally of the United States and because of this, increases in foreign and military aid as well as military equipment sales have occurred.

Recent developments between China and Thailand have shown a strengthening of ties between the two countries. Mainly focused on military exchanges, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country that holds joint military exercises with China. An article in *Jane's Defence Weekly* in October 2010 states "Exercises such as this serve two purposes. They strengthen military-to-military ties with Thailand in a spirit of co-operative openness. At the same time, they are a clear announcement of China's growing interests and military presence in

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

the wider region.”<sup>65</sup> Therefore it is critical for the U.S. to ensure its relationship with Thailand continues grow stronger as evidence mounts showing China’s interest in Southeast Asia.

### **U.S. – Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – China Dynamics**

ASEAN is a regional intergovernmental organization of ten countries throughout Southeast Asia. The member countries are: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Formed initially in 1967, members are bound by the following key principles: mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty; equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations; the



**Figure 10. ASEAN - China**

right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion, or coercion; non-interference in the internal affairs of another; settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner; the renunciation of the threat or use of force; and effective cooperation.<sup>66</sup>

After thirty years of existence, ASEAN in 1997 published a collaborative vision for 2020. In 2007, they adopted a legally binding charter and the association was awarded observer status by the UN General Assembly.

ASEAN has led to the creation of additional groups such as ASEAN Plus Three (which consists of the ASEAN countries plus China, Japan, and South Korea), and the ASEAN Regional

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<sup>65</sup> “China Expands Exercises with China,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, October 2010, <http://articles.janes.com/articles/Janes-Defence-Weekly-2010/China-expands-exercises-with-Thailand.html> (accessed January 18, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 24 February 1976, <http://www.asean.org/1217.htm> (accessed December 15, 2011).

Forum, which focused on regional security and peace issues. ASEAN countries recognize China's rise and how critical that rise is to the concurrent economic development of ASEAN members. However, ASEAN maintains a certain level of distrust with regard to China's intentions and the maritime claims and territorial disputes that exist. Therefore, ASEAN looks to balance China's rise while increasing security ties with the U.S.

The United States only recently recognized ASEAN as a critical relationship in the region and views the current dynamic as an opportunity to strengthen ties and foster cooperation with ASEAN in the years to come. The U.S. signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia in 2009, which strengthened this relationship. The U.S. and ASEAN held the first-ever U.S. – ASEAN summit in November 2009 and again in 2010. The relationship between China, ASEAN, and the United States will be a critical factor in the stability of the region and specifically the South China Sea, where disputes and vital resources are found throughout.



## CHAPTER THREE: FLASHPOINTS

The complexity and nuances of the relationships throughout the Asia-Pacific region have created an additional layer of tension: the flashpoints of Taiwan, the maritime claims and disputes found throughout the South China Sea, and the Korean Peninsula. If provoked, these flashpoints can lead to near-term conflict not only for countries within the region, but also for the United States. With a thorough understanding of the potential for crisis in the region, the U.S. will be able to frame the China dynamic more completely.

### Taiwan Flashpoint

A democracy of twenty-three million citizens, Taiwan for decades has been a vital interest of the United States and a potential flash point for the Asia-Pacific region. Taiwan's cross-strait relationship with the People's Republic of China is of specific interest and concern. Current U.S. policy does not recognize Taiwan diplomatically, but "seeks to support security, political, and economic interests in peace and



**Figure 11. Taiwan - China**

stability as well as the status quo in the Taiwan straits, Taiwan's efforts to maintain international space, democracy and human rights in Taiwan, and U.S. businesses in Taiwan.”<sup>1</sup> The People's Republic of China does not recognize the Republic of China (Taiwan) and vice versa. Current U.S. policy focuses on a peaceful resolution of the situation to be handled by Taiwan and China;

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Research Service Report. *U.S.-Taiwan Relationship: Overview of Policy Issues*, by the Congressional Research Service, August 4, 2011 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2011), 1.

however, the United States has not promised to cease arms sales to Taiwan as long as China refuses to renounce the use of force to unify Taiwan with China, and continues work diplomatically and militarily with both Taiwan and China. Charles Glasser, in an article titled *Will China's Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism*, states:

A crisis over Taiwan could fairly easily escalate to nuclear war, because each step along the way might well seem rational to the actors involved. Current U.S. policy is designed to reduce the probability that Taiwan will declare independence and to make clear that the United States will not come to Taiwan's aid if it does. Nevertheless, the United States would find itself under pressure to protect Taiwan against any sort of attack, no matter how it originated.<sup>2</sup>

A scenario in which mainland China decides to reclaim the island of Taiwan militarily would pose serious questions regarding the U.S. response, the shifting balance of power, control of the South China Sea, and the impact to other countries in the region. Although the dialogue between China and Taiwan has improved, tensions increase when discussions or arms sales between the U.S. and Taiwan occur. In reality, the People's Republic of China possesses the military capability to reclaim Taiwan through military force.<sup>3</sup> Dan Blumenthal, a member of the Project 2049 Institute, states:

More importantly, it is past time for U.S. allies to continue discussing how destabilizing a Chinese attack on Taiwan would be, how best to forestall it, and how to avoid nuclear war should the Chinese attempt an invasion. In the event that Taiwan falls into China's hands, Asia could be cut in half, the U.S. command of the Pacific would be further imperiled, the South China Sea could become a Chinese lake, and Japan would lose strategic depth. Indeed, with China's growing basing infrastructure on Hainan Island, a few bases and ports with missile and ISR forces placed in Taiwan could begin to give Beijing control of the South China Sea.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Glasser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism," *Foreign Affairs* 90, iss. 2 (Mar/April 2011), 87.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Ross, "The Rise of Chinese Power and Implications for Regional Order," *Orbis* 54, no. 1 (Fall 2010), 525-545.

<sup>4</sup> Blumenthal, Dan with Randall Schriver, Mark Stokes, L.C. Russell Hsiao and Michael Mazza, *Asian Alliances in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Arlington VA: Project 2049 Institute, (August 30, 2011), 20.

From the U.S. perspective, a “reunification” of Taiwan with mainland China would be a destabilizing event both regionally and internationally. It would provide the PRC with a launching pad for regional maritime dominance and could very well split the region in two. Additionally, the message this would send to U.S. allies and partners in the region would certainly destabilize the region. In testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in June of 2011, Professor June Teufel Dreyer stated:

Taiwan faces a strategic dilemma: it is principally dependant on China for its economic prosperity while it must principally rely on the United States for its security. The latter is confirmed by the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 and by the six assurances given to Taiwan by President Ronald Reagan in 1982. Meanwhile, a series of ‘accidents’ committed to print and ‘misstatements’ by high-ranking U.S. officials—sometimes corrected and sometimes not—have caused Taiwanese to worry about whether Washington intends to keep its promises... This brings us to the second factor that should determine U.S. policy toward Taiwan: the need to remain true to our own principles. To abandon a democratic country to an authoritarian government with an abysmal human rights record is a repudiation of all that the United States stands for.<sup>5</sup>

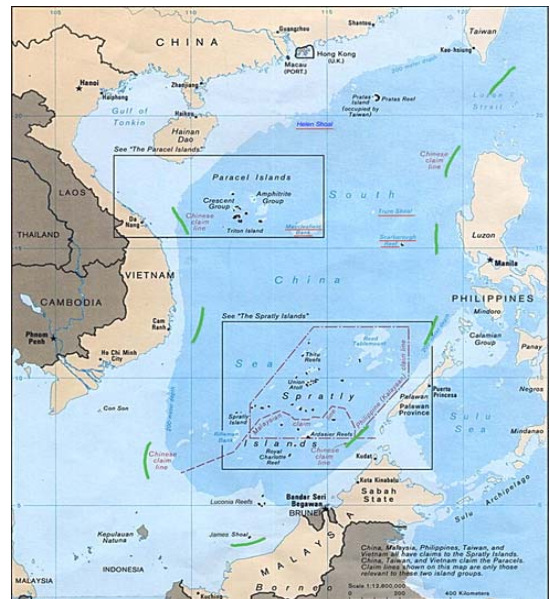
If a flourishing democracy were allowed to fall to a communist state, the damage to trust in the U.S. as a security partner would be irrevocable. Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and other stable democracies in the region would be faced with the reality that the U.S. may not be able to uphold security agreements and in turn, would cause great instability, a potential arms race, and ultimately conflict. It is not fair to say that Taiwan is simply a symbol of U.S. commitment to democratic states and the region; the absorption of Taiwan into the People’s Republic of China would have global consequences if not settled peacefully between the two.

### **Maritime Claims, Disputes, and the South China Sea**

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<sup>5</sup> Dreyer, June Teufel, “Why Taiwan Matters,” Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, June 16, 2011.

The South China Sea contains incredible economic possibilities and liabilities. In framing the problem, disputes in the South China Sea are over territorial sovereignty—namely the islands, reefs, and rocks within, rightful jurisdiction over the waters, and the rights of states to use the South China Sea for military purposes.<sup>6</sup> A vast area covering more than 1.3 million square miles, the South China Sea stretches from the Strait of Malacca to the Taiwan Strait. China,



**Figure 12. South China Sea - Nine-Dashed Line**

Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines are neighbors and as such, are all economically reliant upon the South China Sea commons. However, the South China Sea, the sea lines of communication, and the territorial disputes within it, represent a larger scale struggle for power, oil, influence, and money. China has recently stated that the South China Sea is a “core national interest” and the United States has stated that free passage through the South China Sea is a U.S. “national interest.” Simply defined, a core national interest is one in which a nation will enter into conflict to defend; therein lies the flashpoint.

Not only does the majority of oil transported to Asia flow through the South China Sea, but there is ongoing exploration in areas that are rich in oil deposits, e.g., the Spratly Islands. The majority of global exports from China and the Asia-Pacific Region flow through the South China Sea. In addition to the importance of safe and secure sea lines of communication to and

<sup>6</sup> Peter Dutton, “Three Disputes and Three Objectives,” *Naval War College Press* 64, no. 4, (August 2011). <http://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/feb516bf-9d93-4d5c-80dc-d5073ad84d9b/Three-Disputes-and-Three-Objectives--China-and-the> (accessed November 10, 2011).

from the South China Sea, its waters also contain the sustenance required to feed the many countries in and around the South China Sea. Six nations are involved in disputes and territorial claims and China has claimed virtually the entire South China Sea as historic Chinese territorial waters.

These disputes are predicated upon reclaiming territory once held, national core interests, increasing spheres of influence, improving defensive postures, and ownership of areas containing vital resources. It is not enough to say that access to the global commons (access to international waters, air and spaces) alone is vital to the stability of the region; the stability of the commons is equally as vital. A dispute over the Kurile Island chain exists between Russia and China. Japan and the Republic of Korea are in dispute over the Takeshima/Dokdo islands. China, Taiwan, Brunei, the Philippines, and Japan are in dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands. China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Malaysia are in dispute over the Spratly Islands. Finally, China, Taiwan, and Vietnam are in dispute over the Paracel Islands. These tensions potentially will lead to conflict over resources and the desire to reclaim ownership.

It is also important to be aware of existing laws and declarations that address disputes and claims throughout the South China Sea. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea specifically addresses territorial seas, sovereignty, and exclusive economic zones. International law is clear that a coastal state's sovereignty extends to the air space and over the territorial sea, as well as to its bed and soil up to a limit not exceeding twelve nautical miles.<sup>7</sup> With regard to Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), which is defined as an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, Article 56 states that the coastal state has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources as well exploration and

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.  
[http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf), Part II, Section 1, Article 2-3.

exploitation for production of energy from the water, currents, and winds. In exercising these rights and duties in exclusive economic zones, the coastal State shall have due regard to the rights and duties of other states and shall act in a manner compatible with the provisions of the Convention.<sup>8</sup>

The Chinese believe that they have indisputable sovereignty over the South China Sea and its islands as can be seen in the “nine-dashed line” depicted in Figure 12. The nine-dashed line is China’s stated claim throughout the South China Sea. Discussion and debate continue over China’s acceptance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Chinese historical maps contain the nine-dashed line, illustrating the Chinese view of territorial waters well outside international law. It is clear that China views their control of the South China Sea as a national core interest.

With regard to the United States, the freedom of maneuver in the South China Sea is critical to the U.S. economy. However, security throughout this body of water is also critical for the global economy. Although the U.S. states that the disputes should be peacefully negotiated within the region, actions speak louder than words. U.S. Naval presence in and around the South China Sea continues and partnerships with South China Sea neighboring countries continue to be strengthened and developed. Proof of U.S. commitment to the South China Sea can be seen in the recent announcement that budgeting has been approved to station Littoral Combat Ships in Singapore.<sup>9</sup>

In 1974, China attacked Vietnamese forces in the Paracel Islands and in 1988, again attacked Vietnamese forces near Fiery Cross Reef. China ousted Philippine forces in 1995 from

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.  
[http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf), Part II, Section 1, Article 55-56.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Priorities and Choices*, (Washington DC: Department of Defense, January 2012), 5.

Mischief Reef. In part, these violent acts led to a unified Association of Southeastern Asian Nations (ASEAN) in opposition of China's aggression.<sup>10</sup> This recent history of aggressive pursuit of Chinese claims, compounded by the resurgence and modernization of Chinese naval capabilities, has raised the level of angst for the countries involved in the disputes and furthered requests for a more committed U.S. presence. It is clear that countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia do not have military capability to defend their claims to the South China Sea; therefore defense of the global commons and the lines of communication must come from the U.S. and other maritime powers such as Japan. Respect for international law and diplomatic means will be the ways in which the South China Sea remains free and open, but increasing tensions, mistrust, desire for resources, and military buildup will continue to make this body of water the critical near-term flashpoint.

### **Korean Peninsula Flashpoint**

As a regional flashpoint, security and stability of the Korean Peninsula remain top priorities not only for the U.S. and China, but for the entire region. A nuclear North Korea, compounded by the recent change in leadership, poses significant challenges. Regime collapse could lead to mass migration as well as tension among China, the U.S., and the Republic of



**Figure 13. Korean Peninsula**

Korea regarding the future direction and potential reunification of the Korean Peninsula. As a

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Dutton, "Three Disputes and Three Objectives," *Naval War College Press* 64, no. 4, (August 2011). <http://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/feb516bf-9d93-4d5c-80dc-d5073ad84d9b/Three-Disputes-and-Three-Objectives--China-and-the> (accessed November 10, 2011).

Chinese buffer state, the future of the DPRK is a core national interest for China. As a nuclear threat, the DPRK remains a critical international security dilemma for the United States. For the remainder of the region, a return to hostilities on the Korean Peninsula would threaten any current stability that exists.

War on the Korean Peninsula or collapse of the North Korean regime have been and will continue to be a flashpoint in the Asia-Pacific region. U.S. influence and presence in the Republic of Korea, Chinese presence and influence in North Korea, compounded by a North Korean nuclear weapons program, ensures the Korean Peninsula will remain a focal point of U.S. policy and strategy. Continued aggressive and reckless behavior by North Korea is followed by continued and aggressive sanctions from the international community. The sinking of the *Chaneon*, artillery barrages on Yeongpyeong Island,<sup>11</sup> and the continued threat of nuclear missile strike have created an incredibly tense dynamic.

U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula has steadily decreased over the past decade. Peninsula stability, regime change, reunification, and maintaining a continued strong regional partnership are the strategic goals. The means and strategy remain challenging. Although turnover in operational control of armed forces in the Republic of Korea continues to be discussed and planned, the U.S. remains in control.

For China, which shares a border with North Korea, what does a reunified Peninsula look like? In analyzing this problem through a Chinese lens, a reunified Korean Peninsula potentially creates an even closer encroachment of a strong U.S. ally and therefore the loss of a much needed buffer state. Additionally, conflict on the Peninsula would lead to a massive immigration

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<sup>11</sup> The sinking of the *Chaneon* and shelling of Yeongpyeong Island by DPRK forces occurred in 2010 and these events further illustrated the instability that exists on the Peninsula and the unpredictability of the DPRK regime.



challenge, the difficult choice of choosing sides, and committing PLA troops to combat a U.S. led coalition force in the South.

Finally, growing concerns exist on multiple fronts for the Republic of Korea. Instability and uncertainty are constant themes as a new leader of the DPRK establishes himself regionally and internationally. The implications of mass migration from North Korea, in the event of regime collapse, poses severe economic and security challenges for Seoul. Additionally, the potential of regime collapse also raises significant questions on China's role and actions if collapse were to occur. DPRK military capabilities and the resources found within North Korea are substantial; therefore the question will remain as to what China will do either to support peninsula reunification or hedge to ensure a buffer state remains.

A significant aspect of the U.S. pivot to Asia-Pacific is to address the uncertainties that exist within the Korean Peninsula flashpoint. Throughout the past decade, U.S. forces in Korea were called to support efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. It appears that those forces will return to the Republic of Korea, which not only confirms U.S. commitment to the region, but also confirms that the Korean Peninsula flashpoint poses a real threat to regional stability.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE CHINESE PERSPECTIVE – PAST AND PRESENT

This chapter will provide a discussion and analysis of the Chinese perspective. To better understand China and its worldview, one must look past Western ideology and bias, and more closely examine the historical events and cultural teachings that drive Chinese thinking. China's history dates back to before 2000 BC – beyond the scope of this discussion. But by reviewing the foundations of modern Chinese thought and the writings of key cultural, military, and political figures, the U.S. can better appreciate the complexities of this emerging global power and more carefully and thoughtfully frame their motivations, actions, and future plans.

### Lost in Translation

In 2000, Michael Pillsbury published a work entitled, *China Debates the Future Security Environment*, in which hundreds of Chinese government-sponsored documents were translated and presented. Pillsbury was very astute in identifying four significant obstacles in understanding the context and significance of the writings that would follow, the first obstacle being the challenge of precise translation of the Chinese language to the English language.

Pillsbury states:

Readers unfamiliar with the Chinese language may not appreciate how wide a range of choice an interpreter has in translating Chinese terms from ideographic symbols, the semantic content of which has developed in a 5,000 year-old cultural framework. For example, the Chinese word *sixiang* may be translated as 'ideology,' 'thinking,' 'thoughts,' and 'doctrine,' among other choices. Chinese verbs have no tense, so tense must be indicated by context.<sup>1</sup>

The second challenge lies in the “changing rules of the Chinese Communist Party about debate.”<sup>2</sup> The majority of authors analyzed throughout this chapter are Party members; as such,

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xix.

any true debate resides in confidential documents or must remain within the limits of Party guidance. This makes it difficult for outsiders to ascertain true sentiment or conviction beyond the Party line. The third challenge lies in the many references to the “Warring States Period”, a significant historical period that occurred in ancient China 2,500 years ago. The Warring States Period serves as the primary foundation for statecraft and international relations theory.

Although it will be addressed in this chapter, the sheer scope and depth of this subject make it nearly impossible for an outsider to fully synthesize. The fourth obstacle: China’s future role in international politics is seldom mentioned and rarely discussed in open source materials and documents; writings and discussions of this topic are held at the secret Party level. Although these challenges do not necessarily inhibit an understanding of China’s view on the future environment, they may not allow for full comprehension.

### **Confucianism**

Prior to entering into the discussion of Confucianism and its role in Chinese history and culture, it may be beneficial to offer a parallel. The United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence are the founding documents by which the U.S. is governed. The Bible and Koran, for example, are the founding documents for Christianity and Islam. Through the study and application of those documents, over time, one can formulate value sets, perspectives, ideas, and create a culture.<sup>3</sup> In China, the Chinese universe was created by the Chinese people, not by a particular event. Chinese values “were essentially secular in nature.”<sup>4</sup> Chinese values were derived from an ancient philosopher known as King Fu-Zi, or Confucius.<sup>5</sup> Confucius lived during the time of the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, Penguin Press, 2011), 13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

(551-479 BC). This was a period of incredible turmoil, conflict, and violence. Confucius was an advisor and dedicated his work to social harmony versus gaining and maintaining power. In his work, *On China*, Henry Kissinger states, “His themes were the principles of compassionate rule, the performance of correct rituals, and the inculcation of filial piety. Perhaps because he offered his prospective employers no short-term route to wealth or power, Confucius died without achieving his goal: he never found a prince to implement his maxism, and China continued to slide toward political collapse and war.”<sup>6</sup> Upon the conclusion of the Warring States Period when again China became unified, the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD) adopted Confucian thought as the state philosophy. Kissinger states,

Compiled into a central collection of Confucius’s sayings (the Analects) and subsequent books of learned commentary, the Confucian canon would evolve into something akin to China’s Bible and its Constitution combined. Expertise in these texts became the central qualification for service in China’s imperial bureaucracy – a priesthood of literary scholar-officials selected by nationwide competitive examinations and charged with maintaining harmony in the Emperor’s vast realms.<sup>7</sup>

The writings of Confucius served as the foundation of future Chinese values and thought, and although a cycle of collapse, war, violence, and unification would occur throughout China’s history, the teachings and ideas of Confucius remained – and remain today. A society based on harmony, order, and spiritual fulfillment, all steeped in education and learning were the keys of his teachings and the keys to peace and stability. For example, Confucius believed:

Love of kindness, without love to learn, finds itself obscured by foolishness. Love of knowledge, without love to learn, finds itself obscured by loose speculation. Love of honesty, without love to learn, finds itself obscured by harmful candor. Love of straightforwardness, without love to learn, finds itself obscured by misjudgment. Love of daring, without love to learn, finds itself

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

obscured by insubordination. And love for strength of character, without love to learn, finds itself obscured by intractability.<sup>8</sup>

Confucius teachings were not a guide to an afterlife, but rather a roadmap to harmony of society and a spiritual code of conduct for the Chinese people. This adopted framework resonates in Chinese culture and leadership today and must be taken into account when trying to understand the Chinese perspective.

### **Warring States Period**

The Warring States Period, and specifically the writings found in *The Stratagems for the Warring States*, is an important aspect of Chinese history, culture, and thinking. An understanding of this period and these writings provides insight into how China approaches international relations and the future security environment. The name Warring States comes from *The Stratagems of the Warring States*, a historical work edited by Liu Xiang. Historians generally refer to the period of 475 – 221 BCE as the Warring States Period, when the first emperor of Qin unified the states. The seven states of Wei, Zhao, Han, Qi, Chu, Qin, and Yan, known as the Seven Powers, were constantly at war with one another.<sup>9</sup> Since 1978, when China implemented its policy of reform, there has been significant progress in the introduction of Western international relations theory; however, China has not created or adopted a systematic approach to international relations theory.<sup>10</sup> *The Stratagems for the Warring States* discusses Chinese views on hegemony, how an entity becomes a hegemon, and how best to deal with a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> Xuetong Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 223.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 199.

state that seeks to dominate several other less powerful states.<sup>11</sup> With regard to the Warring States Period, Pillsbury states, “According to interviews with Chinese military officers, these stories are embedded in Chinese culture just as the West has its own history, its own literature, and its own Bible stories.”<sup>12</sup> Additionally, China views today’s environment and international landscape as resembling the times, environment, and dynamics seen throughout the Warring States Period, and because of this, multiple books have been published throughout China in the past several years reviving studies on ancient statecraft. Yan Xuetong in his work, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, states:

Understanding what *The Stratagems for the Warring States* says on this issue not only aids a deeper understanding of the real state of international politics today but it also can bring together and enlighten studies of comprehensive national power, international systems, international strategy, and China’s rise.<sup>13</sup>

The contributors to *The Stratagems of the Warring States* stated that a combination of political, military, economic, and geographical factors comprise the power of a hegemon.<sup>14 15</sup>

The political factor is stressed throughout *The Stratagems of the Warring States*. Yan states: “The term political power is modern; its corresponding terms in the ancient periods are virtue, benevolence, the Way, justice, law, worthies, and sages.”<sup>16</sup> It is important to put aside the Western idea of political power to understand that the Chinese idea of political power includes concepts of justice, benevolence, virtue, and the ability to utilize all available resources,

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), xxxv.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., xxxv.

<sup>13</sup> Xuetong Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 137.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>15</sup> Definition of hegemony: preponderant influence or authority over others: domination. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hegemon>

<sup>16</sup> Xuetong Yan, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 115.

including the military, to further one's goal to hegemony. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from *The Stratagems of the Warring States*:

I, your minister, have heard that Yao did not even have three acres of land, Shun did not have even a yard of land, and yet they acquired all under heaven. Yu did not have a village or even a hundred people to become a sage king over the feudal lords. The armies of Tang and Wu did not exceed three thousand men and their chariots were not more than three hundred four-horses, yet they were established as Son of Heaven. Reliability won them their Way.<sup>17</sup>

From this excerpt it can be inferred that one is capable of achieving hegemon status without expansive lands, citizenry, or armies.

*The Stratagems of the Warring States* also discusses the importance of a military and as stated previously, debates occurred throughout this writing on the importance of one factor over another.

From this it can be seen, when was there no war?...If today you want to annex all under heaven (a phrase referring to China), defeat states of ten thousand four-horse chariots, make enemy states submit, rule all within the seas, love the ordinary people, and make feudal lords subordinate, it cannot be done without the military.<sup>18</sup>

*The Stratagems of the Warring States* identified the importance of geography and the role it plays in the attainment of hegemony. Geopolitical advantages and the requirement for a strong power base are detailed throughout as a key to attaining hegemony. Not only was geography a source of power but it also could serve to deter adversaries.

Your state, great King, in the north has Mount sweet Springs [in Shaanxi] and the Valley Mouth Pass [in Shaanxi], in the south the Jing and Wei rivers [both in Shaanxi], to the east Mount Long and Shu [both in Sichuan], to the west the Han Pass and Mount Ban [Mount Xiao]. Your war-chariots number a thousand, your special forces a million. If with the courage of the Qin army and the huge number of chariots and riders you attack the feudal lords, then it will be like hunting with

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 114.

swift hounds of the state of Han and catching rabbits. The business of a hegemonic king can be attained.<sup>19</sup>

*The Stratagems of the Warring States* discusses the idea of norms and legitimacy in achieving hegemony. It would not be enough to use simply military force to conquer another. To achieve the status of a hegemon, one would need to ensure that actions conducted were also legitimate. Yan states:

Some of the strategists in the book think that to win over the majority of states to recognition of one's hegemony, military force is not sufficient. The hegemonic state must also respect interstate norms. One Qin strategist thinks that the way the state victorious in war treats other states and honors treaties it has signed will affect whether other feudal states willingly accept its hegemony. He thinks that someone who wins and is not arrogant may attain human authority. One who signs agreements and is not angry or resentful may attain hegemony. The former will bring it about that all states submit, whereas the latter will lead neighboring states to join in an alliance.<sup>20</sup>

These ancient concepts are equally as pertinent today. In pursuit of hegemony, one must be careful to not act unilaterally, and if forced to do so, must understand the ramifications of that unilateral action. Defeat of an enemy does not result in a willing acceptance of being ruled and certainly does not create good will or future alliances.

With regard to the use of military force and its legitimacy, contributors of *The Stratagems of the Warring States* believed that illegitimate use of force call into question the legitimacy of the hegemon. Ji Lian, a strategist during the Warring States Period states, "Today the king moves troops to become a hegemonic king and attacks to gain the trust of all under heaven. You rely on the size of the kingdom and the might of your troops and attack Handan so as to expand your territory and win honor for your name. The more numerous your military actions, O King,

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 124.



the further you are from attaining humane authority.”<sup>21</sup> *The Stratagems for the Warring States* offers three sources for legitimate use of military power: a war’s purpose is just, the state to be punished by military force is evil, and the adversary is less civilized.

With regard to strategy, grand strategy and military strategy are not separated; the two are interconnected and intimately linked. Annexation and alliances are discussed as main strategies within *The Stratagems of the Warring States*. To fight a war a great distance away is futile. Even if victory were attained, it would be far too difficult to rule and influence the land, and thereby diminishing the strength of the hegemon. This easily correlates to China’s desire to regain lost territory, the large number of potential adversaries and conflicts on its borders, and the necessity to increase its sphere of influence throughout the region.

With regard to war, the *Stratagems of the Warring States* discusses when war is appropriate and, more importantly, the choice to attack first or wait to be attacked. The majority of strategists in the book state that it is the one who waits before acting has the greater opportunity to achieve hegemony. Yan states, “The strategist Su Qin thinks that the first aggressor will run into many problems later, whereas one who responds later can rely on more allies, and the more allies one has, the greater one’s strength. A greater number of men and more power can put down one who has little assistance and can lead to victory in war.”<sup>22</sup>

In this brief review of the Warring States Period, the historical context has been framed and can shed light on China’s perspective and their motivations in today’s international landscape. The first take away from this review: a unique combination of political, military, economic, and geographic factors are firmly embedded in Chinese thinking on the future security environment. Secondly, political power is steeped not only in influence, but also in one’s ability

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 135.

to manage effectively and to govern the military, the citizenry, and the resources. Without political “surefootedness” all other aspects will falter. The third takeaway is the importance of geography. Although clear borders exist today, the geopolitical importance of the region plays an immense role in China’s views of its own rise and that of the United States. Border disputes, maritime claims, India and Japan’s growing influence, the instability on the Korean Peninsula, and the U.S. presence throughout the region highlight the importance and relevance of geography in international relations. Finally, the *Stratagems of the Warring States* discussion on legitimacy and the act of war provides insight into ideas such as “active defense” and when and when not to enter into conflict.

So what became of the Warring States Period? Pillsbury writes, “Warring states that rose too fast suffered attack, dismemberment, and even complete extinction. In the final phase of the Warring States era, as every literate Chinese knows, a brilliant strategist formed a coalition that stood for several decades against the predatory hegemon Qin. Chinese authors today apparently believe the United States is this kind of hegemon, which, if provoked, will attack or ‘contain’ China to preserve its hegemony.”<sup>23</sup> At the time of Pillsbury’s work, the year 2000, China was assessed as “too poor and weak and must avoid being dragged into local wars, conflicts about spheres of influence, or struggles over natural resources.” Twelve years later, it could be argued the landscape looks quite different; but a continued look at China’s view of the U.S. as the world’s hegemon is important to understanding the situation today.

### **Multipolarity**

A fairly recent assessment of the future security environment was completed following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Drawing upon the lessons of the

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), xxxix.

Warring States Period, China assesses that great rivalries will emerge and because of this, many local wars will be fought. In this time a “re-division of spheres of influence” and struggle for world leadership will take place.<sup>24</sup> Through the analysis of well over thirty authors, Pillsbury compiled the following eight features of what China assesses as the turbulent transitional period:

- After the transition period is complete, there will no longer be any “superpowers” but instead a “multipolar world” in which five major nations—China, the United States, Japan, Europe, and Russia—will each have roughly equal Comprehensive National Power (CNP).
- The nations that will do “best” in competitive terms during the transitional period will pursue “peace and development” and enhance their economic competitiveness. By avoiding local wars, they can decrease defense expenditures and avoid the damage of warfare. Chinese authors frequently assert that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of the United States are due in large part to extremely high defense spending and diminishing competitiveness in CNP.
- Today’s “sole superpower” is in severe decline. The United States risks declining so extensively in contrast to the rise of other nations that it will fall to the level of a mere “common major nation.” The continual weakening of U.S. strength in the decades ahead is an important feature of the Chinese assessment.
- After this transition to a multipolar world, a new “world system” will emerge to govern international affairs, one that will probably resemble the current Chinese proposal of the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.”<sup>25</sup>
- The new Chinese-style world system of the Five Principles will be much better than systems of the past and present, because there will be harmony, no “power politics,” and no more “hegemony.”
- Some Chinese military authors believe that there is now underway a revolution in military affairs (RMA) that will radically change future warfare. Several recent Chinese books assert that the United States may not exploit the RMA as well as other nations in the decades ahead. China’s generals “plan to be better, to be ahead of everyone...and become latecomers who surpass the old-timers” in the new revolution.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>25</sup> Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual nonaggression; mutual noninterference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence. Originated with a 1954 agreement between Zhou Enlai and India's Jawaharlal Nehru. ([http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/china/cn\\_glos.html](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/china/cn_glos.html)).

- A major global nuclear war is highly unlikely for two decades. This official forecast is a sharp change from the forecasts of Chairman Mao that a global nuclear war was inevitable.
- There are many global forces at work for *luan* (turbulence, a word that also may be translated as chaos) including the potential for nationalist, militarist takeovers of Japan and India. The “main trend” in the world is toward “peace and development,” but “potential hot spots exist which could lead to the involvement of major powers and regional powers in direct military confrontation.” As suggested by one writer, this is true even in Asia: “Although the Asia-Pacific region has been relatively stable since the end of the Cold War, there are also many uncertainties there. If certain hot-spot problems are not handled properly, they may cause conflicts, confrontations, and even war in this region, thus wrecking the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region.”<sup>26</sup>

It is important to note that this assessment by Chinese authors was compiled prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the decade long wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 2008 economic crisis. It can be argued that their prediction of a declining U.S. sphere of influence due to defense spending and a weakening economy, the probability of local wars occurring similar to those of the Gulf War in 1991, and growing turbulence has in large part been accurate. However, their assessment that the U.S. “may not exploit the RMA as well as other nations in the decades ahead” is not accurate. Although major program development has not occurred, the effective uses of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and the rapid development of mine resistant ambush protected (MRAP) vehicles in the past decade of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been extremely successful.

Interestingly though, and a severe break from normal practice, an opposition view emerged and several Chinese articles were published in the late 1990’s refuting the majority-held assessment of a future security environment steeped in multipolarity. This serves as an important event in what one may call the “debate” about multipolarity and the hegemony. What Pillsbury calls the “revisionist multipolarity” assesses that the U.S. will maintain superpower

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), 5-6.

status for at least three decades, will maintain established alliances with Germany and Japan, will remain the only “pole” able to decide key issues in any region, and that China “does not have sufficient qualifications to be a ‘pole.’”<sup>27</sup> This opposition view highlights that not all senior Chinese leaders and officials shared an identical assessment of the future environment and for the first time, there was public debate and disagreement. At the time, it was more than noted that the lessons of the Warring States Period were not followed. From this, extensive efforts were made to counter the revisionist view and provide proof in multiple articles and journals that the orthodox view was still accurate.

The orthodox view was reinforced by the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the PLA, General Xiong Guangkai’s speech at Harvard in 1997. Xiong stated:

- Peace and development have become the main theme of the current epoch. However, we cannot but note that the world is still not tranquil.
- Since the beginning of the 1990’s, as many as 68 local wars or armed conflicts have broken out in all parts of the world.
- Any efforts for seeking hegemony and world domination can only result in accumulating contradictions and fermenting war.
- Only by acknowledging and promoting the concept of multipolarity can we bring about peace and prosperity.
- The practice of resolving contradictions among countries by relying on augmenting military blocs, strengthening military alliances or engaging in military confrontation is not conducive to preserving peace and safeguarding security.
- It is necessary to develop a new concept. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence which have been consistently initiated by the Chinese Government for years, shall constitute an important foundation for establishing a global security system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>28</sup>

As of 2000, China’s assessment of a multipolar world has been slow to take form. The NATO strikes on Yugoslavia and the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999 brought about pause in the Chinese assessment of multipolarity. From these events, China

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 17.

remained steadfast in an assessment of a future multipolar security environment, but came to the realization that it may take longer than previously assessed. Additionally, the view from China was that the U.S. was now successfully building a coalition using the EU and Japan to increase U.S. dominance. One Chinese author writes, “Internationally, the United States has formed a collective hegemonist alliance, turning some international, political, economic, and military organizations into U.S. tools for hegemony.”<sup>29</sup> One Chinese author states, “In order to establish a unipolar global dominance, the United States needs a group of helpers no matter whether it is viewed from the political, economic, or military angle.”

Finally, it is essential to understand the Chinese view on “world structures” or *zhanlue shijie geju*. Pillsbury states, “This term is used to refer to the design of the world pattern, which, according to Chinese, generally exists for several decades before undergoing a major transformation. Each ‘world structure’ is based on the organization and state of relations among the great nations in the world. The process by which one world strategic pattern gives way to another usually occurs in a major war.”<sup>30</sup> During the past 200 years China identifies four major patterns. The first structure, called the Vienna System by the Chinese, lasted forty to fifty years and was a result of the defeat of Napoleon. From this period Russia, Austria, Prussia, and Britain emerged and stability was maintained and the center of gravity was Europe. The second structure also lasted between forty and fifty years was created by the American Civil War, the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the political unification in Italy, and German unification and defeat of the France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871.<sup>31</sup> These events greatly impacted the prior spheres of influence and distribution of power and started to incrementally shift the international

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 34.

center of gravity from Europe to Asia and the United States. The third world structure followed the end of the First World War. The Chinese call this structure the Versailles System and the victories of the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan created a clear, new balance of power.<sup>32</sup> The fourth and final structure to date, as seen by the Chinese, is the Yalta System derived from the Yalta Summit. Pillsbury states, “Most Chinese claim this conference ‘carved out the spheres of influence in Europe and Asia for the United States and the Soviet Union.’”<sup>33</sup> The Chinese believe a declining British sphere of influence led to the emergence of two poles: the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The Yalta System lasted for fifty years and ended in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

So this brings us to present day and the question of the next world structure. As the global landscape continues to evolve at such a rapid pace, it is difficult to ascertain the Chinese perspective on what lies ahead.

### **Chinese Perspective on Future Wars**

It is also critical to examine the Chinese perspective on the sources of future wars and what these wars will look like. Pillsbury states:

The future world structure will depend on the outcomes of competitions in both military strength and CNP. The struggle for “peace and development” will shift the competitive rank orders of various nations according to their CNP, which is based on the economic and technology policies they pursue. At the same time, in the military domain there are different rules to the international competition, including the uses of force and the competition for military superiority.<sup>34</sup>

Among many Chinese authors and officials, there is strong agreement that future local wars are a certainty. Inherent struggles for power and military superiority will cause sufficient

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 37.

instability, leading to multiple local conflicts that last for a number of years. Liao Yonghe of the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) writes, “With the future reduction of the danger of a global world war, regional armed conflicts and limited wars will become the main field of military conflict.”<sup>35</sup> Interestingly enough, the Chinese’s perception of ‘local war’ includes the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War in 1991. This is an incredibly important distinction and definition because the Western definition of a local war would not be to the scale of the Korean or Vietnam conflicts and certainly not to the scale of the Persian Gulf War.

Additionally, the Chinese are cognizant of the increasing number of conflicts during as well as following the Cold War. “According to Li Zhongcheng of the Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), ‘In the 40 years of the Cold War, there were 190 regional conflicts, an average of four per year. In the first 7 years after the end of the Cold War there were 193, an average of 28 per year, seven times that of the former year average.’”<sup>36</sup>

According to consensus among senior Chinese officials, other powerful nations are preparing for increasing numbers of local and regional wars in the future. The Chinese see preparations occurring in the United States, Russia, Japan, and India as each country assesses increased risk and the emergence of future threats. This being said, Chinese authors do state that in the *larger* international environment, there will be a movement towards peace and development.

Knowing that China believes future conflict is a certainty and will come in the form of local and regional wars, it is now appropriate to discuss Chinese thought on the source of these conflicts. According to Chinese perspective, the world continues to be in a state of transition following the Cold War, and a new balance is emerging and has yet to take its final form. The

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 38.



competition for power, influence, and resources will remain as it did through the Warring States Period and as it has throughout modern history. “Hot spots” will emerge as instability occurs.

Former Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS) president Chen Qimao states:

These hot spots must go through a process, from breaking out, to intensifying, to relaxing, to resolution. Currently, their development still is not very even; some have already relaxed, some are intensifying, some have just broken out, some have not yet shown their heads; they still are in a stage where “as one falls another rises.”...Internationally, following the end of the Cold War, the various forces have been re-dividing and uniting, and relations between the powers are very unstable, which also is a very significant source of the turbulence in the transformational period. Therefore, the current world is still not stable.<sup>37</sup>

As early as 1997, China predicted the shift in potential “hot-spots” from Central and Eastern Europe to Africa and the Middle East. China views the conflicts in Africa not as isolated civil wars, but as greater contributors to international instability. China also expects the Israeli-Palestinian and other Middle Eastern regional conflicts to continue and intensify. Chen Feng, a Senior Research Fellow at the China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CIISS), writes:

The conflicts in Africa and the Middle East have their respective causes, e.g., the complicated ethnic or cultural contradictions, frontier resource disputes and internal struggles, etc. However, if analyzed from a deeper perspective, these conflicts reflect the struggle to control these regions between the great powers. Conflicts in these regions all have the intervention from those powers involved. The United States, making full uses of the chance that France had adjusted its African policy, tried various means to create its own agents in Africa and to drive the French forces out of its sphere of influence. In the Middle East, because the U.S. policy is biased toward Israel, it has put the peace process in a stalemate, and its influence in the Arab world has declined.<sup>38</sup>

Although China sees the growth and probability of more local and regional conflicts in the years to come, the actions of the hegemon will greatly impact and influence those conflicts. As one author writes, “Hegemonism and power politics are still developing, and there will be no

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 44.

peace under heaven in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>39</sup> Chinese authors state that the U.S. has a “Gulf War Syndrome:” “The United States, the world’s sole superpower, developed a ‘Vietnam syndrome’ on account of its defeat with heavy casualties in the Vietnam war, and became careful and cautious for a time about getting involved in overseas conflicts. Success in the 1991 Gulf War produced “Gulf War syndrome” in the United States and it became enthusiastic about military intervention activities.”<sup>40</sup> It remains clear that the Chinese expect the use of U.S. military force to continue as a destabilizing force that will not foster peace and development in the years to come.

Lastly, China believes that competition for essential economic resources will also drive future wars. He Xin states:

The energy and natural resources crises of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century will unavoidably lead to the economic decline of industrial countries, and cause the intensification of economic and political wars as countries contend for natural resources and markets. In this situation, the world probably will enter a new “Cold War” (economic, political war), even a “Warring States era” with numerous local and regional hot wars emerging.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, future wars will be fought locally and will occur frequently. The wars will be caused by hegemonism and power politics; ethnic, religious, and territorial reasons; and by the increasing demand for critical natural resources. It is important to note that in the Chinese reference materials available, China does not list itself as a cause of future conflict.

### **Perceived American Decline**

Numerous articles, journals, publications, and books have been written recently discussing a perceived American decline, occurring now or imminently. Pillsbury states:

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 47.

This “inevitable” decline of the U.S. hegemon is a decisive feature in China’s assessment of the future. Without U.S. decline, there will be no multipolar structure in which a rising power can seek protection. Without the fading away of U.S. military alliances with Europe and Japan, a rising power will have no new partners with which to align. Additionally, without U.S. decline, Chinese Marxism would be proven false.<sup>42</sup>

There are three areas where China sees the American decline occurring: utilization and exploitation of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA); operational and logistics capabilities as seen in the Persian Gulf War in 1991; and overall U.S. military weakness.<sup>43</sup>

Although a somewhat dated term in today’s U.S. military, RMA speaks to the Chinese focus on advancing military technologies and capabilities to fight the future war. Due to a variety of reasons such as arrogance, declining military budgets, and the now universal availability of newer technologies, the Chinese believe that in the decades to come, the U.S. may no longer have the advantage over other militaries in the realms of technology and capability. This claim is partially substantiated by the lack of U.S. development of new technologies, due to budgetary restraints and the cost of fighting wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. However, concepts such as AirSea battle and the effective uses of UAV’s and MRAP’s seem to counter Chinese claims of decline.

China’s assessment of U.S. performance in the Persian Gulf War in 1991 provides interesting insight and a vastly different perspective on U.S. military activities. Lauded as a success in the United States, the Chinese believe that the U.S. narrowly won the Gulf War and that Saddam Hussein could have claimed victory with a better strategy. Additionally, they concluded that the United States is unable to execute a strategy of two major regional combat

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 64.

operations<sup>44</sup>, did not possess the capabilities to contain China, and that U.S. munitions cannot damage deep underground bunkers like those in China.<sup>45</sup> The Chinese also cite examples of the cumbersome transport time to deliver U.S. troops and supplies prior to the Gulf War – six months in some cases. They claim that the sheer distance to transport the necessary support to fight on Chinese ground extremely limits the combat effectiveness of the U.S. military. As in the Gulf War, China views the U.S. reliance on coalitions and alliances to fight a drawn-out war in Asia as challenging and unlikely. This thinking may change as the U.S. continues to build and strengthen alliances in Asia-Pacific. The Vice President of the Academy of Military Science (AMS), Li Jijun wrote with regard to U.S. performance in the Gulf War:

U.S. Armed Forces revealed many weak points. For example, the combat consumption was too great, and it could not last long. There was great reliance on the allied countries. The high-tech equipment was intensive and its key links were rather weak; once they were damaged, combat effectiveness was greatly reduced. Also, if the adversary of the United States was not Iraq, if the battle was not fought on flat desert, if the Iraq Armed Forces struck first during the phase when U.S. Armed Forces were still assembling, or if Iraq Armed Forces withdrew suddenly before the U.S. Armed Forces struck, then the outcome of the war might have been quite different.<sup>46</sup>

As discussed, Chinese military strategy centers on patience and waiting for an enemy to strike first. This assessment alludes to a potential shift in thinking in terms of a “strike first” option, bypassing the central lessons taught in the *Stratagems of the Warring States Period*.

Concluding Chinese analysis of U.S. efforts throughout the Gulf War, the Chinese strategy of “defeating the superior with the inferior” resonates time and again. Chinese analysts assembled ten strategies that could have been employed to exploit U.S. weaknesses throughout the Gulf War: fortification of positions, exploiting weaknesses, prevention of specialized

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<sup>44</sup> 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance states the U.S. will no longer plan for two major combat operations.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), 70.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 76.

training, use of special measures (such as those used by the North Vietnamese), study of high-tech weapon vulnerability, camouflage tanks, destruction of the nonlinear (exploiting gaps present due to a formal assault), establishment of sound, independent economic structures (referencing Iraq's dependence on outside sources for items such as food, medicine, and ammunition), establishment of a nuclear deterrent, and assessment and exploitation of air power such as the employment of AWACS. Additionally, the Chinese assess U.S. aircraft carriers as vulnerable and understand the critical impact aircraft carriers would have in a conflict in Asia.

China's overall assessment of the United States has not changed over the past several years. "Dangerous but declining" is the phrase used by Chinese national security specialists and if put in the perspective of the Warring States Period, "America is a decaying hegemon whose leaders are as yet unaware that their fate is unavoidable."<sup>47</sup>

### **Today's Perspectives**

Henry Kissinger's work *On China* discusses a new reality for today's relationship between China and the United States: "The United States and China perceived that they needed each other because both were too large to be dominated, too special to be transformed, and too necessary to each other to be able to afford isolation."<sup>48</sup> Following the previous discussion on Chinese culture, history, and perspectives up through the year 2000, it is now important to examine Chinese perspectives of the past decade. As stated, up until the year 2000 the overall Chinese assessment was that the U.S., although perceived to be in a state of decline, was the world's hegemon with unparalleled military power. Although there have been many changes throughout the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, two significant events occurred during this period

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>48</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, Penguin Press, 2011), 487.

that have largely shaped the view and perspective of Chinese leadership to the present day: September 11<sup>th</sup> and the two wars that ensued, and the 2008 U.S. economic crisis.

In the years following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, as the wars continued in Iraq and Afghanistan and as China's economic and military power continued to grow, the idea of a shift to a multipolar international system remained. Kissinger writes:

A 2005 Foreign Affairs article by the influential Chinese policy figure Zheng Bijan served as a quasi-official policy statement. China had adopted a "strategy...to transcend the traditional ways for great powers to emerge." China sought a "new international political and economic order," but it was "one that can be achieved through incremental reforms and the democratization of international relations."<sup>49</sup>

Concurrently, Hu Jintao delivered a speech to the U.N. General Assembly and stated:

China will, as always, abide by the purposes and principles of the U.N. charter, actively participate in international affairs and fulfill its international obligations, and work with other countries in building towards a new international political and economic order that is fair and rational. China's development, instead of hurting or threatening anyone, can only serve peace, stability, and common prosperity in the world.<sup>50</sup>

China provided these statements to communicate Chinese intent, attempting to clarify policy and set forth strategy to deal with widespread concerns regarding their peaceful rise. China sensed a shift in global perceptions, power, and influence and recognized the cost of the two wars to the U.S., as well as the impact of the perceived unilateral action bringing about the two conflicts.

Through an incredible confluence of events, the rhetoric, tone, and narrative in China changed in 2009, but the fundamental perception of a declining U.S. remained. Continued U.S. military action in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. economic crisis in 2008, continued economic growth in China, and the incredible display seen during the Beijing Olympic Games started to

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 499.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 500.

bring about changes in the positions held by Chinese leadership. Professor Nye in an article titled *Should China be Contained* states:

After the 2008-2009 financial crisis, as China recovered rapidly and resumed 10% annual economic growth, some Chinese officials and commentators urged a more assertive foreign policy to reflect China's new strength.<sup>51</sup>

The ideas of a gradual rise were no longer held by all senior Chinese officials. In a speech in 2009, Hu Jintao confirms the accuracy of earlier Chinese assessments of a declining U.S. and the shift to multipolarity:

Since entering the new century and the new stage, internationally there has been a series of major events of a comprehensive and strategic nature, which have had a significant and far reaching influence on all aspects of the international political and economic situation. Looking at the world, peace and development are still the main themes of the times, but the competition for comprehensive national power is becoming more intense; the demands of an expanding number of developing countries to participate equally in international affairs are growing stronger by the day; calls to bring about the democratization of international relations are becoming louder; the international financial crisis has caused the current world economic and financial system and the world economic governance structure to receive a major shock; the prospects for global multipolarity have grown clearer; in international situation has produced some new features and trends worthy of extremely close attention.<sup>52</sup>

Around the same time, two books were published in China: *China is Unhappy: the Great Era, the Grand Goal, and Our Internal Anxieties and External Challenges*, and *China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era*. With regard to both texts, Kissinger states:

Both books are deeply nationalistic. Both start from the assumption that the West is much weaker than previously thought, but that 'some foreigners have not yet woken up; they have not truly understood that a power shift is taking place in Sino-Western relations.' In this view, it is thus up to China to shake off its self-

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<sup>51</sup> Nye, Joseph S. "Should China Be 'Contained'?" CNN.com, July 4, 2011, <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/07/04/should-china-be-contained/> (accessed August 31, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York, Penguin Press, 2011), 503.

doubt and passivity, abandon gradualism, and recover its historic sense of mission by means of a 'grand goal.'<sup>53</sup>

Interestingly enough, both books were criticized within China as irresponsible, not reflective of the majority of Chinese people, and not in accordance with Chinese policy. However, these texts did pass strict government review and went on to become best sellers.<sup>54</sup> Publicly, senior Chinese officials have refuted the views of both texts; however, the publishing approval and widespread popularity send a strong signal that Chinese thinking and their approach to the international landscape have changed significantly.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 505.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 505.



## CHAPTER 5: RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk is evident in both the Asia-Pacific region and in the implementation of the new Defense Strategic Guidance. A risk assessment is required to properly frame the China dynamic, better understand the complexity of the Asia-Pacific region, and comprehend the impact of recent national guidance. Risk will be assessed with regard to planned force structure changes, the 2011 Budget Control Act, allies and partners within and beyond the region, possible Chinese reaction to the Strategic Guidance, and overall regional themes that contribute to risk.

### Force Structure Cuts

The necessity to draw down forces is discussed in both *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and the *Defense Priorities and Choices*. Secretary Panetta states:

The country is at a strategic turning point after a decade of war, and therefore, we are shaping a Joint Force for the future that will be smaller and leaner, but will be agile, flexible, ready, and technologically advanced.<sup>1</sup>

Although the force will become smaller, the global landscape remains fraught with instability. Historically, draw downs do occur following major combat operations; the difference in today's environment is that multiple threats remain. The projected downsizing of the Army from 562,000 to 490,000 and the Marine Corps from 202,000 to 182,000 does not provide certainty that U.S. land forces will be well equipped to respond to unforeseen crises in the years to come.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership 2012: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*. (Washington DC: Department of Defense, January 2012), Preface.

### **Preoccupation in Asia-Pacific**

The Defense Strategic Guidance states: “Building partnership capacity elsewhere in the world also remains important for sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership.”<sup>2</sup> However, the impact of the U.S. pivot to the Asia-Pacific may introduce risk to relationships with allies and partners outside of the region. Strategic guidance and priorities are focused on Asia-Pacific and the Middle East and offer little in terms of reassurance to other partners and allies. Those countries, which rely upon the United States for security, may now be forced to either invest in improved military capabilities or look elsewhere for security reassurances. A second or third order effect of this possibility is a potential for instability and for the U.S. to lose valuable allies and partners.

### **Overextension**

Although the Strategic Guidance provides prioritized goals and missions, overextension of U.S. forces becomes a risk. A smaller force will be faced with underwriting security in Asia-Pacific and the Middle East in the context of an unstable and dynamic global environment. Additionally, the Strategic Guidance may embolden U.S. adversaries outside of the Asia-Pacific region. Adversaries viewing the shift in U.S. priority and resources to the Asia-Pacific in addition to significant defense budget cuts may perceive an opportunity to act more aggressively and assertively in other arenas. Although the strategic guidance definitively states the necessity for the U.S. to be able to respond to any contingency and maintain a firm global presence, the fiscal reality and smaller force will make this difficult.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 3.

## **Dependence within the Region**

Prior to publication of the Strategic Guidance, countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region questioned U.S. commitment to the region, its abilities to maintain long-term presence in the region, and whether it was declining power. Countries such as Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Vietnam heavily invested in military capabilities and modernization to ensure their own national security. There is a risk that because of the new strategic shift, countries will no longer invest in such capabilities because the U.S. has committed to underwriting regional stability. Burden sharing and renewed ally cooperation are critical to the success of U.S. strategy; therefore continued military development by regional allies and partners must continue.

## **Risk in Budget Realities and Sequestration**

Travis Sharp, author of *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, states:

The Obama administration's new strategic guidance assumes that the Department of Defense (DOD) will absorb \$487 billion in cuts to its budget over the next decade. Yet that assumption does not match the current law of the land, sequestration, which will roughly double the amount of cuts. If sequestration occurs, DOD will not be able to execute this new guidance.<sup>3</sup>

The Strategic Guidance sets forth goals and priorities bound by the planned \$487 billion in budget cuts. Potential sequestration in January 2013 would make the Strategic Guidance unexecutable. If sequestration were to occur, the Pentagon estimates that Department of Defense budget cuts would shift from \$487 billion to \$950 billion, thereby forcing renewed examination of defense priorities and even further prioritization of executable military missions. These would both create risks to U.S. national security.

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<sup>3</sup> Travis Sharp, Center for a New American Security Press Release, January 5, 2012, [http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/press/CNAS%20Experts%20Assess%20New%20Pentagon%20Strategic%20Guidance%20Jan%205%202012\\_0.pdf](http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/press/CNAS%20Experts%20Assess%20New%20Pentagon%20Strategic%20Guidance%20Jan%205%202012_0.pdf) (accessed January 16, 2012).

## **Chinese Perceptions**

The United States, already enjoying alliances and partnerships as well as access throughout the region, has now clearly articulated the importance of Asia-Pacific to national interests and national security. As the U.S. pivots to the Asia-Pacific, it is possible that China may see a window of opportunity closing with regard to their regional influence, military development, and regional presence. A U.S. strategic pivot to Asia-Pacific could also be interpreted as a containment strategy aimed at China. China's reaction to perceived containment could increase tensions between the United States and China, sever ongoing diplomatic efforts, bring about a more aggressive and assertive China, and increase the potential for conflict. The potential exists for not only an arms race between China and the U.S., but a region wide arms race.

## **CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

United States national guidance has directed a strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific region. Historic parallels have been drawn, relationships and flashpoints analyzed, Chinese culture and perspectives considered, and risk assessed. To implement the directives set forth in the Defense Strategic Guidance; this chapter outlines strategy recommendations in the following areas: regional focus, engagement versus containment, thoughtful modernization, flashpoint management, and proper framing.

### **Historical and Theoretical Awareness**

Power transition theory and the dynamics present prior to World War I provide the necessary theoretical and historical background to better understand the current environment. China is a rising power, as was Germany in the late nineteenth century. Although the United States and China share responsibility for continued regional and international stability, the United States ultimately is responsible for ensuring them. Britain's response to a rising Germany was to build an alliance structure and maritime force capable of defeating Germany. Germany's response to Britain's actions was to prepare for what they perceived as eminent conflict. Today, the U.S. is secure in both its allies and military capabilities, therefore does not require sweeping changes to the current international system and vast expansion of military forces. What the United States must do is learn from history and understand the dynamics involved in the proven power transition theory. The U.S. must lead by example; if the same is expected of China, then U.S. policies and intentions also must be clearly articulated while providing the necessary military transparency. Additionally, the United States must fully understand and react responsibly to the dynamics that accompany a rising power. David Lai, author of *The United States and China in Power Transition*, states:

The United States should bear in mind that a rising China will naturally “ask for more,” even if Chinese leaders try to make China’s expansion less demanding. The United States should therefore guard against the tendency to overreact to China’s moves.<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. response must not be that of Britain prior to World War I; the U.S. must develop a more tempered and thoughtful response to China’s rise. In summary, strategic recommendations are as follows:

- The U.S. must lead efforts regarding national intentions, policy, and military transparency.
- The U.S. must react responsibly to the dynamics that accompany a rising power.

### **Regional Focus**

The United States must approach the future of Asia-Pacific with a comprehensive, regional focus, versus a singular focus on China. This distinction reinforces the critical nature of the relationships, alliances, and partners found throughout Asia-Pacific. The 2012 Strategic Guidance states:

Our relationships with Asian allies and key partners are critical to the future stability and growth of the region. We will emphasize our existing alliances, which provide a vital foundation for Asia-Pacific security. We will also expand our networks of cooperation with emerging partners throughout the Asia-Pacific to ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests.<sup>2</sup>

As this strategic guidance and Asia-Pacific pivot begins to take form, the tendency to equate China’s rise with a threat and focus solely on combating that threat will greatly reduce the effectiveness of the overarching strategy. Asia-Pacific allies and partners are the United States’

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<sup>1</sup> David Lai, “*The United States and China in Power Transition*. (U.S. Army War College: December 2011), xi.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership 2012: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defense*. (Washington DC: Department of Defense, January 2012).

strategic center of gravity for the region. Failure to build upon existing relationships and foster new partnerships will result in failure to successfully execute this strategy.

Security and mutual defense agreements with Japan, Australia, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand are well over sixty years old and will require continuous reassessment to ensure the agreements speak to the changing nature of the region and the evolving interests and security of all parties. Additionally, the United States must evolve current U.S. and bilateral military exercises in the region into multilateral events. The U.S. – Australian exercise, Talisman Sabre, the U.S. – Indian exercise, Malabar, and the U.S. exercise, Valiant Shield, must grow into larger-scale exercises that include additional partners such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore. Expanded combined joint exercises will enhance interoperability, build military capacity, illustrate a greater unity of effort, and leverage the U.S. engagement within the region. Although interoperability and differing levels of capabilities will be challenges, the result of building upon combined joint military exercises will have lasting benefits throughout the region.

The U.S must foster and develop relationships with organizations such as ASEAN. This will further support multilateral efforts throughout the region to ensure continued regional stability. Senior official attendance and participation in ASEAN functions must continue and Presidential, Secretary, and Chairman level attention must be given. The influence of ASEAN throughout the region has driven China to become significantly more involved and receptive to the association, and the United States must do the same.

Finally, efforts to strengthen and build relationships with India, Indonesia, and Vietnam must become a priority for the United States. The U.S. and India enjoy a strong military relationship and recent exercises such as the Combined Afloat Readiness and Training exercise

(CARAT) with Vietnam and Indonesia have gained momentum; however, as these three countries gain greater influence in the region, further efforts must be made to ensure that diplomatic, political, and military relations continue to strengthen. In summary, the strategic recommendations are as follows:

- The U.S. must build upon the existing partnerships and alliances of Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand to ensure lasting critical partner status remains.
- The U.S. must reconfigure and evolve bilateral exercises such as Malabar and Talisman Sabre to multilateral joint military exercises to build joint capacity.
- The U.S. must continue to actively participate and contribute to multilateral organizations such as ASEAN through senior level visits to the region and senior level presence at multilateral events.
- The U.S. must strengthen the relationships with India, Indonesia, and Vietnam through both diplomatic and military means. Increased military-to-military exchanges and joint exercises will lead to strengthened relationships.

### **Flashpoint Management**

To avoid near-term conflict and ensure stability in Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula, the United States must maintain open dialogue and have steady and continued diplomacy.

Militarily, the U.S. must retain U.S. forces in Japan, recommit forces to the Republic of Korea following the decade long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and maintain access and presence in and around Taiwan. The United States must commit the necessary and required force levels to the Republic of Korea to ensure the capability to deter and defeat DPRK aggression exists.

Additionally, as Area Access Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities continue to be developed in



China, the U.S. must continue to maintain stalwart maritime presence around Taiwan to not only provide reassurance to an ally, but to maintain access to a critical area in the region. Full-scale conflict on the Korean Peninsula or Chinese aggression towards Taiwan would create dire consequences for the region, the United States, and the entire international community. The second and third order effects of either of these two conflicts are hard to predict, but regional stability, the world economy, the potential for nuclear strike, and incredible loss of life would most certainly ensue. Finally, the United States must not engage on these issues unilaterally, but must push China to work cooperatively and utilize Chinese influence to peacefully resolve these issues.

The U.S. must have a responsible presence throughout the South China Sea to reassure allies, ensure the maritime commons remain open and free, and demonstrate U.S. commitment to the new strategic guidance. The South China Sea, a stated “core national interest” for China and stated “national interest” for the United States, introduces a significant threat to regional stability and great potential for conflict to emerge between China and the United States. Although the situation in the South China Sea does not appear as dire as the Korean Peninsula or Taiwan, one can only infer that as a “core national interest”, China is prepared to enter into conflict over it. To mitigate the threat of this flashpoint, the U.S. must increase joint military exercises with Southeast Asian countries, increase overall U.S. naval presence throughout the South China Sea, and encourage China to settle territorial disputes through joint measures and peaceful means. Building maritime capacity in Southeast Asian countries will ultimately increase their ability to properly secure territorial waters. Increased U.S. military presence will ensure access to these commons remain open and free while also reassuring allies and partners of the U.S. commitment to the region. Engaging China to mitigate the inherent flashpoints in the South China Sea will

provide a stage for China to act as a responsible global power and through Chinese diplomacy and multilateral efforts, peaceful resolution can occur. Asia-Pacific flashpoints offer real and near-term threats for the United States and therefore continued efforts to properly manage these flashpoints must occur. In summary, the strategic recommendations are as follows:

- The U.S. must continue diplomatic efforts with regard to Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula.
- The U.S. must ensure appropriate force levels are maintained in the Republic of Korea.
- The U.S. must continue to have maritime presence and operate in vicinity of Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait.
- The U.S. must exercise with Southeast Asian countries to build maritime capacity.
- The U.S. must increase military presence throughout the South China Sea.
- The U.S. must engage China to lead cooperative efforts to resolve regional flashpoints. Multilateral efforts, lead by the U.S. and China, provide the greatest potential for continued stability.

### **Proper Framing**

Through the study of Chinese culture, history, and perspectives, it can be concluded that China believes that: a combination of political, military, and geographical factors comprise the power of a hegemon; the international environment continues to move towards one of multipolarity; future local wars on the scale of Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War are a certainty; and the United States is a declining power. Understanding these factors are critical when framing the problem and developing and executing strategy. The United States must understand that China continues to pursue territorial claims and maritime disputes because geography is a critical factor of power. The U.S. must understand that the *Stratagems of the*

*Warring States* discusses the importance of expansive lands and armies and that the China of today possesses and continues to build upon both. China did not participate in the establishment of the current international system; therefore China's focus and efforts toward building a multipolar system today allows for Chinese influence and impact. The United States must understand the phrase, *da jiang shan*, which means that the nation was built by wars and that China's history has seen well over 6,000 wars. This supports China's expectation that future local wars are a certainty and require preparation now. Finally, the United States must understand that China believes the U.S. lost the wars in Korea and Vietnam, the U.S. could have been easily defeated by Saddam Hussein if the proper strategy were executed, and that major vulnerabilities exist in U.S. military capabilities due to logistic requirements and expended efforts throughout the past decade in Iraq and Afghanistan. These factors, in addition to the continued impact of the 2008 U.S. economic crisis, drive Chinese perception that the U.S. is in decline. An understanding of China and their perspective must be incorporated into strategy development, strategy execution, and problem framing.

The Asia-Pacific region has a rapidly changing landscape. The U.S. must continually reassess the evolving dynamics to ensure that strategy is properly formulated and successfully executed. In the words of the ancient Chinese general, strategist, and philosopher, Sun Tzu, in his work, *The Art of War*:

It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle.<sup>3</sup>

In summary, the strategic recommendations are as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Sun Tzu and Samuel Griffith, *The Art of War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

- The U.S. must incorporate Chinese culture, history, and perspectives when creating and implementing strategy.
- The U.S. must continue to reassess and reframe the China dynamic due to the rapidly changing regional security environment.

### **Thoughtful Modernization**

In the midst of significant budgetary restraints, the Department of Defense and U.S. military must make responsible and thoughtful choices in order to modernize and build a military ready and able to defeat future adversaries. Significant risk exists in the United States' ability to address budget realities while maintaining and developing the necessary military capabilities to address, deter, and, if necessary, defeat future threats. The DOD *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices* document, released following the publishing of the Defense Strategic Guidance document, addresses the capabilities required to effectively support the Asia-Pacific pivot:

For these forces to remain capable, we had to invest in capabilities required to maintain our military's continued freedom of action in the face of new technologies designed to frustrate access advantages. Consequently, we increased or protected investment in capabilities that preserve the U.S. military's ability to project power in contested areas and strike quickly from over the horizon, including:

- Funding the new bomber
- Design changes to increase cruise missile capacity of future Virginia-class submarines
- Design a conventional prompt strike option from submarines
- Upgraded radars for tactical aircraft and ships
- Improved air-to-air missiles
- New electronic warfare and communication capabilities<sup>4</sup>

Although the current capabilities that will be preserved and the future capabilities that will be needed sufficiently address the naval and air requirements for a pivot to Asia-Pacific

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Priorities and Choices*, (Washington DC: Department of Defense, January 2012), 5.

*today*, it is impossible to predict what will occur in the future. The proposed and developing AirSea Battle concept, aimed at countering anti-access area denial capabilities, will require significant investment in counter-space operations, Navy Aegis ship presence, stealth capability, long range strike capability, and multiple aircraft carriers. Although there are fiscal constraints at present, it is essential that these capabilities remain as well as improve. It is critical that the United States continues to reassess technological developments and current capabilities to ensure they properly align with the rapidly changing security environment and address the requirements to combat future threats.

Additionally, commitment to the future force must endure through election cycles and budget cuts. National security and interests are at stake; if the Executive and Legislative branches do not provide the necessary funds to ensure national security and if the Department of Defense does not thoughtfully and responsibly develop the proper capabilities, serious risk will be introduced. In summary, the strategic recommendations are as follows:

- The U.S. must maintain, improve, and develop a force capable of executing the AirSea Battle concept and effectively operate in an area-access anti-denial environment.
- The U.S. must commit to long-term programming to ensure the future force is capable of dealing with an unknown and technologically advanced future threat.

### **Engagement**

U.S. strategy with regard to China must be one of balanced and watchful engagement. Balanced engagement must encompass a wide range of areas, issues, and interests. Watchful engagement requires close attention be paid to the response and reaction of Chinese leadership with regard to U.S. efforts. The United States must pursue a strategy of engagement to encourage greater Chinese participation in regional and international issues where common goals

exist. The U.S. also must improve upon military-to-military engagement to address misperceptions and mistrust and must engage China (by providing an avenue for Chinese influence and input).to work together on significant regional challenges such as the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea.

The United States and China share common goals with regard to issues such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, countering terrorism and violent extremist organizations, stemming the spread of pandemic disease, the impact of climate change, and free and open access to the global commons to support economic growth. Common goals should therefore lend themselves to cooperation and from cooperation will come a shared burden to approach the current set of challenges as well as future challenges not yet identified.

Additionally, cooperation to achieve common goals will improve U.S. – China relations, add to the credibility of engagement efforts, and minimize the inherent degree of mistrust.

Currently, there is an insubstantial amount of military-to-military engagement between the United States and China. Although recent visits by senior military officials have occurred, no system or consistency exists. The United States and China must commit to military education exchanges, senior military officer exchanges, multilateral military engagements, and combined efforts to mitigate shared regional security risks. Through concerted military engagement, mistrust and potential military missteps will be reduced and a dialogue will be opened.

Finally, the United States must engage China to collectively approach significant challenges such as the instability on the Korean Peninsula and the disputes found within the South China Sea. A joint effort, lead by China and the U.S., will provide significant improvements to regional stability and will ultimately lead to peaceful resolution of these significant issues.

Risk exists throughout the process of engagement. Misperception by China that U.S. engagement is a means to contain China or push Western values and ideals may occur. International misperception that the United States is appeasing China may also result. Improperly executed engagement could result in Chinese refusal to cooperate on those common goals, may sever diplomatic and military ties, and could lead to a more assertive and aggressive China. Regionally and internationally, improperly executed engagement with China could lead to strained U.S. – partner relations, increased military development and acquisition, and overall instability. These risks, however, are acceptable in light of the risks associated with alternate strategic approaches such as containment. The risk in a strategy of containment is best summarized by David Shambaugh, author of *Containment or Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing's Responses, International Security*:

A policy of containment would certainly confirm Chinese elite suspicions about Western subversion and hostility to the Communist regime. A containment policy would work directly against Western desires to improve human rights, stimulate civil society, and pluralize politics in China. All leverage would be lost and China would have no incentives to cooperate in these or other realms; indeed, it would be free to act with impunity. A China unconstrained by the global system would be far more dangerous and injurious to Western (and Asian) interests.<sup>5</sup>

With that said, the U.S. must be prepared to firmly respond and react diplomatically, economically, and militarily if efforts to engage China are unsuccessful. In summary, the strategic recommendations are as follows:

- The U.S. must engage China on issues that are shared common goals in order to strengthen the relationship, deal with mutual mistrust, and provide a means to cooperatively address future challenges.

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<sup>5</sup> David Shambaugh, *Containment or Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing's Responses, International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn, 1996), 180-209.

- The U.S. must commit to a program of military-to-military exchanges to include military education exchanges, senior military official exchanges, multilateral military engagements, and combined efforts to mitigate shared regional security risks.
- The U.S. must engage China to jointly approach significant challenges such as instability on the Korean Peninsula and the disputes found within the South China Sea.
- The U.S. must understand the risks involved with engagement and be prepared to act firmly in response to China's opposition to U.S. efforts.

### **Conclusions**

National policy and guidance has been set forth to shift U.S. focus and resources to the Asia-Pacific region. In order to execute this strategy successfully, the U.S. must properly frame the China dynamic. Per the research covered in this document, the U.S. must obtain a clear understanding of history and the relevant historical parallels, regional relationships, potential flashpoints, Chinese perspectives, and strategic risks. As the international strategic center of gravity moves, Asia-Pacific strategy and policy development must include efforts to grasp the evolving intricacies, dilemmas, and nuances of the region. All too often, military strategy and policy development occur according to a misguided and self-imposed sense of urgency. The U.S. would be better served to learn from historical examples and commit on the front-end to framing the China dynamic in a thoughtful and comprehensive way.



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